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Edwardsburg council approves fishing pier, park bench purchases

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
Leader Publications Contributor

EDWARDSBURG — New benches are still on the way to Gunn Park.

The Edwardsburg Village Council had to approve Monday a slightly more expensive set than previously approved, at a cost of $2,138.50. They also approved the purchase and installation of a fishing pier in the park at a cost not to exceed $50,000. Though the village had previously delayed the purchase due to the unplanned expense of tornado clean-up in the spring, Peak noted continued requests by the community for such an amenity, citing the village master plan, the parks committee, and anecdotal requests.

"It is the people's money," said Peak. "And the people want to see a pier in Gunn Park."

The funds will come from the General Fund as one withdrawal to cover the pier, a new truck, and a required software upgrade to village computers. The council emphasized their intention to make such withdrawals rare.

The council also approved up to $1,200 for an employee to attend the annual conference of the Michigan Section of the American Water Works Association in Port Huron.

Trustees voted to extend benefits to a village employee who had previously not received them. Edwardsburg offers a Health Savings Account (HSA) of $3000 each year to employees on the village insurance plan, but an employee not on that plan will now receive similar compensation to balance for their ineligibility for the HSA. Village President Dennis Peak noted that the change to village insurance a few years ago has helped save Edwardsburg money, even with the HSA benefit.

The council also approved a change to paid employee holidays, officially shifting to match the same federal and state holiday schedule recognized by Cass County. The Village had historically followed the schedule, but had

See APPROVES, Page A8

Man arrested after woman's body found in home

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES CHARTER TOWNSHIP — The South Bend man accused in the murder of Courtney Hershberger was arraigned Wednesday in Berrien County Court.

Rene Lopez Alvarado, of South Bend, was arraigned on charges of Homicide-Open Murder and Felony Firearms with a bond set at $2 Million with a GPS Tether condition.

Hershberger, 29, was found dead Monday afternoon inside of her home in Franklin Woods Mobile Home Park, 1950 S. 13th St. Preliminary results of an autopsy performed on Hershberger at WMED in Kalamazoo show that she died of a gunshot wound.

Alvarado

It was revealed that Hershberger and Alvarado were involved in a relationship.

Leader Publications will be updated as more information becomes available.

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
Honor Credit Union's "Going Bananas" team races through the water in their heat at the annual ROCK THE BOAT event presented by Honor Credit Union this past Thursday, July 17th.

United Way of Southwest Michigan's Rock The Boat raises $45,000+

COMMUNITY REPORT

ST. JOSEPH — United Way of Southwest Michigan's ROCK THE BOAT Cardboard Boat Races, Presented by Honor Credit Union, returned to the Inn at Harbor Shores for another great year of racing for a great cause Thursday, July 17, 2025.

Nineteen boats from various area organizations and businesses helped bolster a fundraising total of over $45,500, including sponsorships & crowd-funded donations from participants and spectators, resulting in a 46 percent increase over last year's event.

The event featured life-size boats made entirely of cardboard racing in 7 heats in the river channel. Spectators lined the Inn at Harbor

See RAISES, Page A8

A GOLDEN CELEBRATION

Brentwood at Niles hosts pageant for seniors

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A Niles senior-living community teamed up with local pageant royalty Wednesday to host southwest Michigan's newest pageant.

Brentwood at Niles teamed up with the Miss Niles Scholarship Pageant and the Miss Apple Festival Pageant to host a Miss and Mr. Niles Brentwood Pageant.

Coordinated by members of the Miss Niles and Apple Festival courts, the pageant featured 23 contestants from Brentwood, who each participated in a walk-through down the runway escorted by pageant court members. Miss Niles 2025 Grabrielle Gittens emceed the event.

"It's the first time they've ever done this, so coming in, I didn't

See PAGEANT, Page A6

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
TOP: Members of the Miss Niles and Apple Festival courts pose with Miss and Mr. Niles Brentwood Liz Heater and Carl Stevens.

OBITUARIES

William Otte
Victor Hector Vasquez
William Christian Mansfield
Joan Marie Zehner
Harry Seifriet Jr.
Rose Marie Kilgore
Larry Luman Granger
Opal Fay Hatcher
Valerie Hundt
Kollin Joe Grover
Jacqueline Sobieralski
Elaine E. Metzger
Joyce Bailey
A6

FRANKLY
TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

"Do something nice for someone today. Small acts of kindness spread like wildfire." A2

Ethan Saylor wins 51st annual Steve's Run 5K B1

FRANKLY

TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip, quip or blip? Call or text Frankly at 219-455-2349 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com

I am so sick of Democrats complaining about the border, the wall and immigration. Finally someone is doing something about the immigration disaster that no Presid~~ent has taken seri~~ously. You can't come into this country illegally and let everyone else pay for your services.

Trump threatens to put restrictions on the Washington Commanders if they don't change their name back to the Redskins. Hmmm, sounds like an epic lawsuit. It's not his place to negotiate a stadium deal anyway!

Love him, hate him, Stephen Colbert being cancelled can only be a product of rightwing negotiations with CBS. He has the top rated late night talk show and no business walks away from that.

People like to complain about change. I'm glad we finally have an administration looking out for the workers of America. It's about time.

At least 85 Palastinians were killed while trying to get food at aid stations. Human beings are starving. Calling all Palastinians Hamas supporters is like calling all Americans Trump supporters. Bad people grow in power and do bad things and the meek get caught in the middle. This isn't a new thing.

Do something nice for someone today. Small acts of kindness spread like wildfire.

Politicians usually don't do the right thing until their lives are adversely affected. It's disappointing how that works.

Goodbye Medicaid! For those of you who support this President and are on Medicaid, good luck with your healthcare. He promised "no cuts" to Medicaid or Medicare. Apparently you are not being cut, just being blacklisted due to your fraudulent behavior while receiving these benefits.

WEATHER

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
70% Chance of Storms	Partly Cloudy	30% Chance of Rain	30% Chance of Rain	Mostly Sunny	30% Chance of Rain
82° 70°	85° 70°	91° 71°	89° 64°	79° 58°	75° 58°

NILES PROTESTS
RALLY FOR, AGAINST TRUMP

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — Two groups of demonstrators gathered in Niles Monday afternoon to make their voices heard.

GOP supporters gathered at Veterans Memorial Park for a "Trump Win of the Day" rally to voice support for President Donald Trump and his administration.

A counter-protest took place in front of Congressman Tim Walberg's Niles office that was organized by the Coalition 4 Democracy to voice concerns regarding the direction the country is heading under the Donald Trump administration and Walberg's role in voting for the "Big, Beautiful Bill."

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

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War veteran honored at Edwardsburg Cemetery

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
Leader Publications Contributor

EDWARDSBURG — In addition to causing severe damage in the village of Edwardsburg, the heavy storms and tornadoes that struck this past March unearthed a piece of history that was honored last weekend.

Spanish-American war veteran, William Fred Kincel, received an honor guard tribute at the Edwardsburg Cemetery this Saturday, July 19.

"Edwardsburg Cemetery got hit fairly hard," said Gordon Carr, chairman of the Edwardsburg Planning Commission, a member of the honor guard of the Edwardsburg American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, and an organizer of the event.

In addition to felled trees and damage throughout the village, the cemetery had to be closed following the spring storms for clean-up and repair. Various headstones needed repair and the grounds required massive clean-up, but the most delicate damage was the grave vault of Kincel that was unearthed.

Restoring the grave took the coordination of several groups, including the Village of Edwardsburg, Paul E. Mayhew Funeral Home, Brutsche Concrete Products, and regulators at the state and local levels. Both Mayhew and Brutsche contributed donations to the effort. Now, the repairs are complete and Kincel has been reinterred.

It was during the process that Village Clerk Sarah Overgaard spoke with Veterans Service Officer of Cass County Karee Krause, who suggested the possibility of giving Kincel an honor guard. Overgaard connected with Carr, who is active in veteran and military events and acts as a local historian on such subjects.

"You don't forget vets," said Carr. "Whether they served two weeks or 82 years."

Carr researched Kincel's story, learning that the veteran was born in Goshen and served under Colonel George Studebaker, the son of Clement Studebaker, who co-founded the H & C Studebaker Company, which would eventually become the Studebaker Corporation. Kincel enlisted, left for Indianapolis, and joined the 157th Regiment of the 3rd Indiana Infantry, Company A, known as the "Studebaker's Tigers". He did not see combat, protecting warehouses in the United States and just gathering in Florida to leave for Cuba when the 1898 armistice was signed.

Carr said that, to his knowledge, no other Spanish-American war veterans lay within the cemeteries he and the honor guard cover. He also noted that Kincel likely never received the burial honors when he did in 1898, making this weekend's events special.

The event featured the honor guard, a twenty-one gun salute, a small speech by Carr discussing Kincel's history and the playing of Taps. The ceremony ended with the placement of the American flag on the newly interred grave.

Niles man gets probation for assault with dangerous weapon

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

Mitchell

NILES — Two area residents were sentenced Monday in Berrien County Trial Court at the Niles courthouse.

Lorne C. Mitchell, Jr., 24, of Niles, pleaded guilty to assault with a dangerous weapon and was sentenced to two years probation, credit for 46 days served, 250 hours of community service and $678 in fines and costs. The guns involved in the incident were forfeited.

The incident occurred May 26 in Niles. A co-defendant, Navonea Maurese-Shemar White, was given a similar sentence last week.

Defense attorney Stephanie Teeple said that Mitchell has a stable home and job waiting for him when he gets out of jail and he just wants to get back to his family. Mitchell said he took full responsibility for his actions and apologized.

"You recognize that you are not where you want to be in your life," Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein said. "It's time you grew up, be better and be done with this."

Timothy Gary Howard, 36, of Mishawaka, pleaded guilty to attempted resisting and obstructing police and use of methamphetamine and was sentenced to credit for 64 days served and $308 in fines and costs.

Howard

The incident occurred May 17 in Niles Township. He has pending charges in Indiana and was previously sentenced to prison in Indiana for an assault incident.

Defense attorney Amy McDowell said that Howard's criminal record goes back primarily to his meth addiction. She added that he also hasn't resolved the trauma of having his daughter murdered while he was in prison. She said that while he has skills, he needs resources and counseling to find a reason for living.

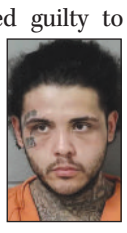
Judge Hosbein agreed with the sentencing recommendation. "Obviously breaking the law has consequences but you are under supervision in Indiana," he said. "Let this be a good start for the rest of your future."

Niles men sentenced to prison on multiple charges

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

CASSOPOLIS — Two Niles men were sentenced to prison Friday in Cass County Circuit Court.

Michael Lorimer Starrett, 28, of Sycamore Street in Niles, pleaded guilty to third offense domestic violence and assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder and was sentenced to two concurrent prison terms.


Starrett

He was sentenced to three to five years in prison on the domestic violence charge and has credit for 110 days served. He must pay $698 in fines and costs. On the assault charge, he was given a prison term of six years four months to 10 years. He has credit for 71 days served and must pay $2,048 in fines and costs.

The domestic violence incident occurred Dec. 24, 2024 at a location in Howard Township. The victim in that case was found with a cut on her forehead and a swollen face and was taken to the hospital.

The assault with intent to do great bodily harm incident occurred May 9 at a location in Milton Township. The victim in that case was found beaten and bloodied with a chunk of hair missing. She was also transported to the hospital. Police had been to the house twice that day with Starrett forcing her to keep quiet the first time they came.

Cass County Prosecutor Victor Fitz called Starrett's behavior egregious with his attacks on the two women. "There are some in society that people absolutely need to be protected from," he said. "He needs to be sent to prison at the top of the guidelines."

Fitz said Starrett has a record of 20 convictions including eight felonies before these two incidents. "He's a person who cannot obey the rules of society," he said. "He's a man who really knows how to say he's sorry but he cannot conform his actions to society. He has tried to manipulate the system with his false tears."

Defense attorney Greg Feldman said that Starrett has accepted responsibility for his actions. "He told the presentence investigation writer that the women in these cases didn't deserve what he did to them," Feldman said. "He didn't try to sugarcoat what happened. He also said his drug use has taken over his life and contributed to his actions."

"Words cannot begin to explain my apologies to the individuals," Starrett said. "I'm ashamed, I take full accountability for my actions. I deserve whatever punishment the court imposes."

Cass County Circuit Court Judge Mark Herman described what happened in both incidents. He noted that the first victim said she was afraid to tell the truth about what happened after Starrett separated her from her family and threatened to kill her.

"These are your ninth and 10th felony convictions," Judge Herman said. "You were sent to prison in 2015 and 2018 on weapon charged including underlying domestic violence charges. You have violated your parole five times. You were again sentenced to prison in 2022 for another two years."

"You have spent seven years of your adult life behind bars and shown you have no intention of changing your behavior," he added. "You have to decide whether you want this to be your life … No woman deserves what you did."

Terrel Kenneth Ward, 37, of Lake Street in Niles, pleaded guilty to resisting police was sentenced to 16 months to two years in prison with credit for 173 days served and $698 in fines and costs.

He also pleaded guilty to receiving, concealing and possession of a stolen motor vehicle and assault with a dangerous weapon and was sentenced to a concurrent 29 months to five years in prison for the stolen vehicle charge and two to four years in prison for the assault charge. He has credit for 164 days served and must pay $2,116 with restitution to be determined.

Ward

The first incident occurred May 5, 2024 in Wayne Township outside of Dowagiac. Police responded to a stolen property complaint and Ward ran from police.

The second incident occurred Oct. 4, 2024 also in Wayne Township. A "be on the lookout" call had been put out by police for a truck stolen in Benton Harbor. A motorist recognized the truck in Wayne Township and called police. He fled from police at speeds of over 110 miles per hour and was eventually stopped in Van Buren County.

Ward is currently serving a prison sentence from a Berrien County conviction for stealing the truck and faces sentencing in Van Buren County for fleeing police.

"I don't think you are an evil person, but you have an addictive personality," Judge Herman told Ward. "One of your addictions is motor vehicles. I don't know why you can't keep your hands off other people's vehicles. You have criminal addictive thinking, it's not just drugs."

"You're digging yourself quite a hole," the judge added. "You have total reckless disregard for the safety of others. It was sheer dumb luck that no one was hurt."

PET OF THE WEEK

Bingo is an eight-month-old tabby with Save A Stray. Volunteers said she is super snuggly and seems to get along with other friendly cats and cat-friendly dogs. Bingo is spayed and current on shots. Contact Save A Stray at (269) 921-0145.

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Opinion

Don't drink and drive

By CINDY SEITENSTICH
Niles resident

Last week we received a letter from the parole board informing us that the drunk driver who crossed the centerline in a curve and hit my son's car head on, killing my daughter, was being paroled in early August. In the 7 years since this horrific accident I have not made any public statements about what happened that night and while I have tried to get justice for my family, I have also tried to treat the different agencies involved with respect and have not spoken with anyone in the media about the events of that night.

In short: my son PJ suffered with a ruptured bowel and a crushed foot along with other minor injuries, his friend Ben also had a ruptured bowel and an injured hand along with other minor injuries, and my daughter Tracy was killed on impact.

Throughout the years since this happened the system has failed us in so many ways I don't know if I have the emotional strength to recount them all but I am going to try.

1) It failed us at the accident scene when I was not allowed to go to my daughter until she had been completely wrapped in plastic with only a hand protruding. A part of me understands the reason behind this, but a mother wants to be with her child no matter what, and she shouldn't have laid there alone and cold on the side of the road for hours before they took her away.

2) It failed us in the process of the autopsy, where she apparently lost almost all of her long, thick hair and no one could tell me why. The coroner told me she had a long braid in the pictures from the morgue (that we didn't get with the report) but no one appeared to know where it went. It seems to me that even if they had to cut it the braid should have gone with her to the mortuary, but the funeral director never received it. While this may seem trivial in light of the end result, it was one more piece of her humanity and dignity that was stripped away without regard for how it might affect her family.

3) It failed us when my son's wife was not allowed to get anything from her car, including her Navy uniforms that were in the trunk until the investigation was over (three long years later) and when it was all done and the car was "released" the fire department where it was "stored" told us that the car was abandoned and was towed away at least a year prior and destroyed because no one claimed it. Is there no record with these cars, and if the prosecutor's office needed it so badly how did they not know it was gone?

4) It failed us when the prosecutor never even had a conversation with us until almost two years after the accident. and it failed us by letting the process drag on for three years before sentencing. In theory this was because the investigation wasn't complete, however, the police department indicated that it had been complete long before this.

5) It failed us when near the end of three years the first call that I got, to get my feedback on the plea that was being proposed, was for six months - three years with possibly no jail time. When I indicated my dismay that my daughter's life was worth virtually nothing I was able to have a phone conference with the prosecutor. In the end they offered her 4-7 years, which is still a very small price to pay for what she took. The drunk driver who caused this crash had: many drunk driving arrests in her past and had not yet been to court for the latest arrest two months prior to the accident; had no license; was driving a car she did not own with no insurance; was legally over the limit (and the lab result was not as high as it would have been had her blood been drawn timely); was positive for THC; killed two people (including a man in her car); and injured five more including herself. Reluctantly we agreed to that proposal as we were afraid if we didn't they would go back to the original 6 months-3 years, but it was a slap in the face as the driver clearly has no respect for the law or the rights and lives of others, and Tracy and her family and friends are serving a life sentence.

6) It has failed us in ways that are too deeply personal to share and not my story to tell, but none of our lives will ever be the same, and there is a hole in our hearts that will never heal.

7) And now it has failed us again by granting parole at the earliest opportunity because "reasonable assurance exists that the offender will not become a menace to society or to the public safety." If the tapes of the court proceedings were reviewed it would be evident that she never even showed remorse until the sentencing, and I have to wonder was that for those she killed or herself because she was going to prison? The letter from the parole board indicated that we could appeal the decision to grant parole, but I have run out of the emotional strength to fight a system that appears to be slanted in the favor of the offenders.

There was a time when I had faith in the justice system, when I naively believed that crime didn't pay, but I no longer trust that the system will look out for the innocent first. There is not a day that passes that I don't think about and miss my daughter, and that pain is compounded by knowing that so many other families are suffering as well. The fact is that the message is not being sent loud and clear that drunk driving will not be tolerated, which is evidenced in part by the fact that just three months after my kids' accident one of my son's friends was killed by a drunk driver in Berrien County. In truth, neither of these events were accidents. When these two drivers made the decision to drink and drive their civil disobedience became criminal acts, and our society promotes drinking and is reluctant to hold their feet to the fire for doing it.

In the end, you win, I'm not fighting you any more looking futilely for justice. I am, however, sharing this letter with local newspapers in the hope that something I've said will make an impact on someone and make them rethink drinking and driving, and may save a life or lives.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SMC should expand presidential search committee

Southwestern Michigan College has rejected the Social Justice Alliance of Cass County's (SJACC) request to expand its Presidential Search Committee, which do not reflect the broad demographics of the community that funds, attends and operates the college. Students and employees are omitted. Tax paying stakeholders (not on the committee) are absent.

Given the opportunity to broaden the demographics of the committee with other Board of Trustees, faculty, or foundation members from which the members were selected, Chair Thomas Jerdon failed to do so. When that gap was pointed out, SMC's response was that the committee was adequately representative, and no other members could or would be added.

Apprehension about the sluggish and closed process also persists. A website posting from July 2nd listed an applicant closing date of August 17th, indicating an application window of almost six weeks, which conflicts with Chair Jerdon's statement specifying that applications would be accepted over a three-week period. To date, only one closed session committee meeting has been held.

We now publicly appeal to SMC's Board of Trustees to reconsider, and to expand the Presidential Search Committee toward representing the unrepresented with a sense of resolve over resistance.

SJACC Board

NEWS

Pitmasters bring the heat at annual Dowagiac BBQ Competition

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — Pitmasters from across the country descended on downtown Dowagiac Saturday to compete for top honors in its third annual Dowagiac BBQ Competition.

When the smoke cleared, BBQ Mike took home Grand Champion honors after earning second and third places in both the chicken and rib categories. Smokey GQ earned Reserve Grand Champion with first and fifth place finishes in chicken and ribs respectively, including a perfect score on chicken and special recognition from the Kansas City Barbecue Society. Smokey Js placed first in the ribs category.

The contest took place Saturday in the Slope's parking lot. While shopping local vendors and storefronts, guests were able to both see and smell the contestants in action. The event was sanctioned by the KCBS – the largest competitive barbecue organization in the world. The event brought pitmasters, judges and enthusiasts from all over the country to downtown Dowagiac.

The competition was fierce, with KCBS-certified BBQ judges judging the meats based on KCBS standards.

"Our third-annual backyard BBQ competition, sanctioned by the Kansas City Barbeque Society and judged professionally, had remarkable results," said BBQ Competition Chair Cathy McBride. "This is the first time that we've had competitors score over the 350-point mark, which is a big deal in the BBQ world — and this year, three competitors exceeded that mark. Plus, last year's Dowagiac Grand Champion, which is the team with the highest point total for chicken and ribs combined, went on to win the national backyard prize. Just like the city of Dowagiac, our BBQ competition punches above its weight, and I'm so proud."

The event is part of Dowagiac's Summer Festival, an annual two-day street festival that saw thousands of people descend on downtown Dowagiac to peruse shops, enjoy activities and visit the record 90 vendors and food trucks. This year, organizers increased the number of free children's activities in place of paid rides. Hundreds of children enjoyed the pop-up splash pad on Commercial Street, which included multiple giant inflatable water slides. The Dowagiac District Library organized a Color Fight where participants sprayed each other using washable colored powders.

COURTESY OF DOWAGIAC CHAMBER
BBQ Competition Chair Cathy McBride poses with Grand Champion BBQ Mike.

The event also featured a bolstered music lineup. On Saturday, three artists performed sets on Beeson Street: The Undertakers Blues Band from Sister Lakes, JP & The Energy from Lansing and Denise Davis and The Motor City Sensations from Detroit.

The event was sponsor-driven through the support of Lyons Industries, Twisted Bee, Southwestern Michigan College, Sturgis Bank — Niles Branch, D. Mottl Realty, Xfinity, MEC, Budweiser and Mennel Milling.

BBQ COMPETITION RESULTS

Grand Champion: BBQ Mike
Reserve Champion: Smokey GQ

Chicken Category

1st: Smokey GQ *** perfect score and special recognition from KCBS!
2nd: BBQ Mike
3rd: Hoosier BBQ
4th: Smokey J's BBQ
5th: Porkasaurus Rex
6th: Preachers BBQ
7th: Red Hog BBQ
8th: Wapatui Smokers
9th: Skinny Pig
10th: Shmack Q

Ribs Category

1st: Smokey Js
2nd: Skinny Pig
3rd: BBQ Mike
4th: Wapatui Smokers
5th: Smokey GQ
6th: Preachers BBQ
7th: Shmack Q
8th: Hoosier BBQ
9th: Jughead's BBQ
10th: Los Primos

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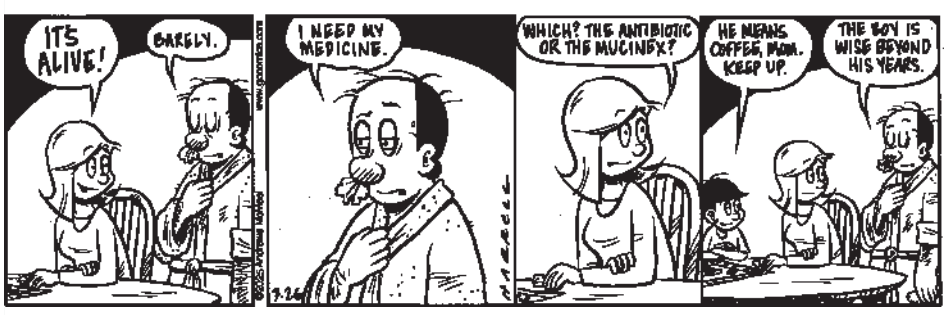
COMICS & PUZZLES

ADAM


IT'S ALIVE!
BARELY.
I NEED MY MEDICINE.
WHICH? THE ANTIBIOTIC OR THE MUCINEX?
HE MEANS COFFEE, MOM. KEEP UP.
THE BOY IS WISE BEYOND HIS YEARS.

ALLEY OOP

GREAT PARTY, ALLEY. WHAT'S THE OCCASION?
NO OCCASION. I JUST DON'T GET TO SEE EVERYONE THAT OFTEN. IT SEEMED LIKE A FUN IDEA.
NO REASON? THAT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE YOU. YOU USUALLY HAVE SOME ULTERIOR MOTIVE.
SORRY. ONE SEC.
THANKS FOR COMING TO MY NEO-ABSTRACT POETRY PERFORMANCE. THIS FIRST POEM IS TWO HOURS LONG.

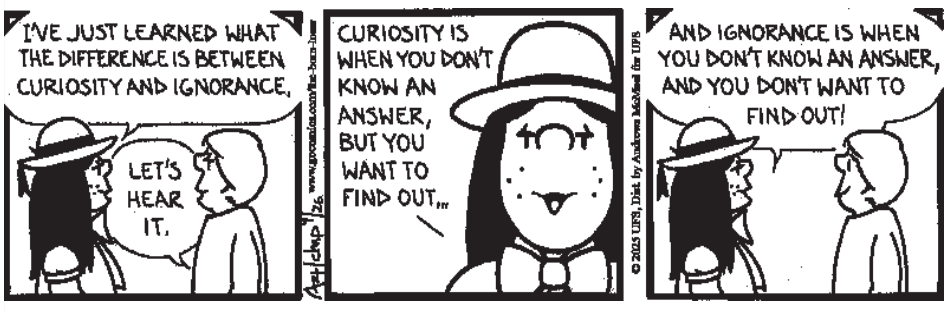
ARLO & JANIS

Sept. 15, 1986, remastered
SON, YOU CAN'T GET SOMETHING FOR NOTHING IN THIS WORLD!
HOWEVER, IT'S VERY EASY TO GET NOTHING FOR SOMETHING!

BIG NATE

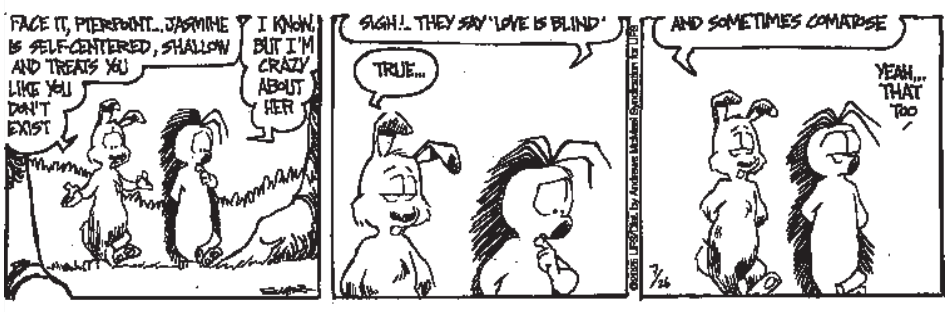
ARTS AND CRAFTS TIME.
YES! I LOVE ART!
GOOD. HERE.
CRAYONS? WHERE'S THE PAPER?
WE'VE GOT NO PAPER, DUDE. DRAW ON THE GROUND.
THIS HAS OFFICIALLY REPLACED "TRACE YOUR HAND TO MAKE A THANKSGIVING TURKEY" AT THE BOTTOM OF THE ART PROJECT BARREL.

BORN LOSER

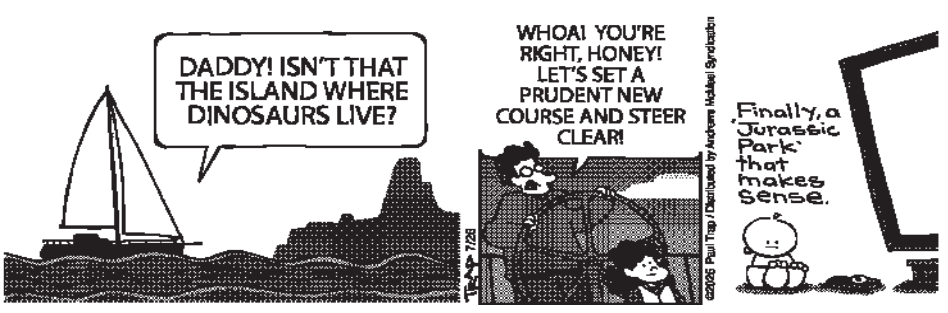

I'VE JUST LEARNED WHAT THE DIFFERENCE IS BETWEEN CURIOSITY AND IGNORANCE.
LET'S HEAR IT.
CURIOSITY IS WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW AN ANSWER, BUT YOU WANT TO FIND OUT...
AND IGNORANCE IS WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW AN ANSWER, AND YOU DON'T WANT TO FIND OUT!

FRANK & ERNEST

GRIZZWELLS


FACE IT, PIERPONT... JASMINE IS SELF-CENTERED, SHALLOW AND TREATS YOU LIKE YOU DON'T EXIST
I KNOW, BUT I'M CRAZY ABOUT HER
SIGH!.. THEY SAY 'LOVE IS BLIND'
TRUE...
AND SOMETIMES COMATOSE
YEAH... THAT TOO

THATABABY


DADDY! ISN'T THAT THE ISLAND WHERE DINOSAURS LIVE?
WHOA! YOU'RE RIGHT, HONEY! LET'S SET A PRUDENT NEW COURSE AND STEER CLEAR!
Finally, a Jurassic Park that makes sense.

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SODOKU PUZZLE

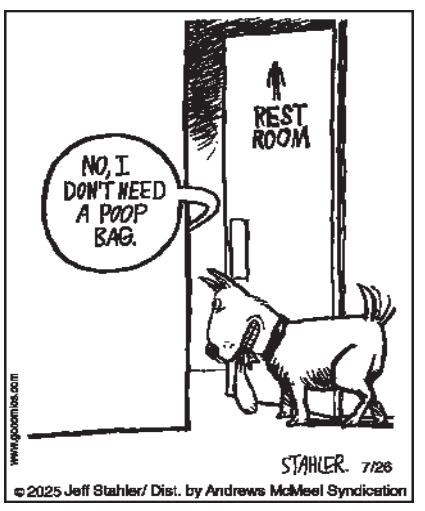
HOW TO PLAY: Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

DIFFICULTY RATING: 5/5

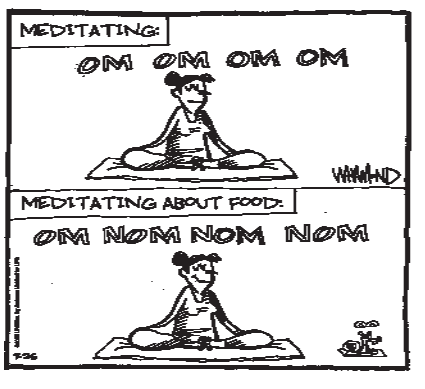
ANSWER ON PAGE 6

					2		3	
			3	5		8		9
6				1			2	
				7		4	5	2
				9				
3	6	7		2				
	2			3				7
9		5		4	1			
	8		5					

MODERATELY CONFUSED



REALITY CHECK



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

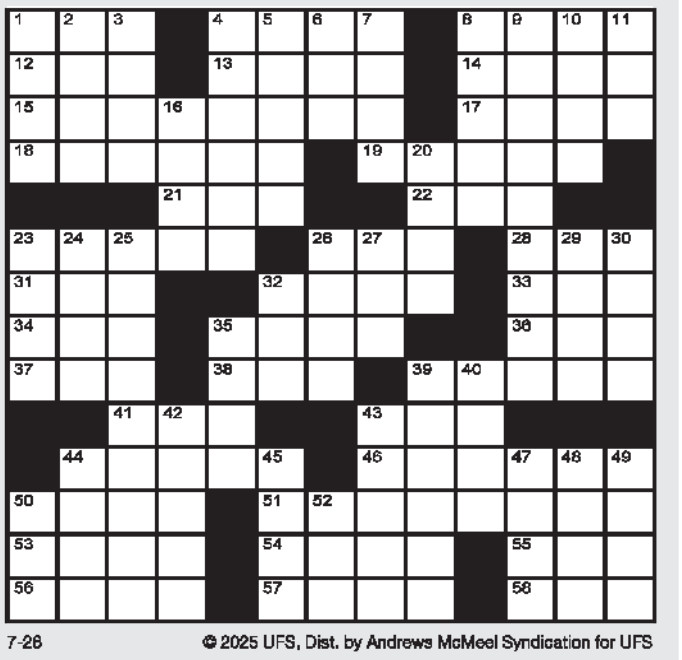
ANSWER ON PAGE 6

ACROSS

1 Fond du —, Wisconsin
4 Did in
8 Meat in a can
12 Org. for lawyers
13 — de foie gras
14 "— la Douce"
15 Upright
17 Marsh bird
18 Apparel
19 Fad
21 Fleur-de- —
22 Squid's output
23 San Andreas —
26 Actor — Carney
28 Like a wallflower
31 Annex
32 Egyptian canal
33 To boot
34 Body art, for short
35 After-dinner candy
36 Wapiti
37 Singer — DiFranco
38 Likely
39 Little pigs number
41 Impair
43 So-so grade
44 Wise men
46 Deft
50 Part of NB
51 Fence for defense
53 — de grace
54 Rights org.
55 Brewed beverage
56 "My treat!" (2 wds.)
57 Quantity of paper
58 Utterance of hesitation

DOWN

1 Volcanic flow
2 Aid and —
3 Haul
4 Team morale
5 Spikes
6 Between zeta and theta
7 Wheal
8 Warning signal
9 Practical joker
10 Among
11 — de mer
16 Money drawer
20 "Puttin' On the —"
23 Greek cheese
24 Chester — Arthur
25 Final demand
26 Mom's sister
27 Soak flax
29 Perforation
30 Oxen's harness
32 Drink
35 Female animal
39 Boredom
40 Word on a towel
42 Wide open
43 — lily
44 Before long
45 Pole on a ship
47 Swearword
48 — fixe
49 Group of players
50 Mil. rank
52 "— Ventura: Pet Detective"



7-26 © 2025 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel Syndication for UFS

BREVITY

HEART OF THE CITY

MY NAME IS DANA, AND I LIKE ACTING BECAUSE I CAN BE A CHAMELEON. I CAN BE ANYONE.
YOU COULD BE ME!
TOTALLY!
"MY NAME'S HEART, AND I LOVE CHIPPY CHIPS AND HANGING OUT WITH WEIRDOS. ME ME ME ME!"
THAT'S VERY ACCURATE, THANK YOU.

DEATH NOTICES

William Otte, 84, of Eau Claire, passed away on Tuesday, June 03, 2025. Services at Chapel Hill Methodist Church on July 26 at 1:00 PM. Burial to Follow Service. www.BowermanFuneral.com

Victor Hector Vasquez, 57, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on Thursday, July 17, 2025. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

William Christian Mansfield, 77, passed away on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, in Mishawaka, Indiana. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Joan Marie Zehner, 82, of Edwardsburg, Michigan, passed away on Saturday, July 19, 2025. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Harry Seifriet Jr., 84 of Niles passed away on July 21, 2025 at Hanson Hospice in Stevensville. Arrangements are pending and entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles.

Rose Marie Kilgore, 80, of Niles, passed away Sunday, July 20, 2025 at Brentwood Living Facility in Niles. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Larry Luman Granger, 67, passed away on Sunday, July 20, 2025 in St. Joseph, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Opal Fay Hatcher, 78, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on Sunday, July 13, 2025. Services will be held at 12:00pm on Friday, July 25, at Mount Calvary Baptist Church.

Valerie Hundt, 72,of Elkhart, passed away Tuesday, July 22, 2025 after a courageous battle with cancer. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

OBITUARIES

Kollin Joe Grover

March 25, 2010 - July 18, 2025

Kollin Joe Grover, 15, of Cassopolis, died Friday, July 18, 2025.

His life began March 25, 2010 in Goshen, Indiana born to Bradley Grover and Rachell Grover.

Kollin cherished his family. He loved anything that had to do with the outdoors. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, football, golf, wrestling, track, and dirt biking. He had a passion for International Harvesters and working on tractors. He had aspirations of becoming a diesel mechanic. He was a gamer and enjoyed playing with his friends. He made the most of time spent with his friends and girlfriend.

Kollin will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by his mother,

Rachell (Chris Williamson) Grover of Cassopolis; his father, Bradley (Tabatha Moses) Grover of Cassopolis; sisters, Kayla Grover of Cassopolis, Brittney Gerger of Goshen, Indiana, Tabitha Williamson of Cassopolis; brother, Trevor Williamson of Cassopolis; grandparents, Bob and Barb Grover of Sparta, Wisconsin, George (Peggy) Etheridge of Cadiz, Kentucky; uncle, Ken (Beatrice) Grover of Summerville, South Carolina, Dutch (Jodey) Etheridge of South Carolina; aunt, Crystal (Carl) Forbes Traverse City; stepsister, Cynthia Price of Goshen, Indiana; stepbrother, Joshua Price of Goshen, Indiana; great aunts and uncles; and a host of cousins and friends.

He was preceded in death by his grandmothers, Irene Grover and Patricia Etheridge.

Family and friends will gather from 4:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Thursday, July 24, 2025 in Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, 202 North Broadway Street, Cassopolis. A funeral service will be held at 11:00 a.m. Friday, July 25, 2025 in the funeral home.

A graveside service will be held at 2:00 p.m. Friday, July 25, 2025 where Kollin will be laid to rest with his grandmother, Irene Grover, in Bremen Cemetery, 100 East 2nd Street, Bremen, Indiana 46506.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Kollin be made to a football, golf, or wrestling organization of donor's choice.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com

Jacqueline Sobieralski

November 12, 1936 - July 17, 2025

Jacqueline "Jill" D. (DeWitt) Sobieralski, a wife, mother and grandmother full of love and kindness, passed away peacefully on July 17, 2025, at Brentwood Memory Care in Niles, Michigan, after a long battle with Alzheimer's. Born on November 12, 1936 in Benton Harbor, Michigan, she was a daughter to the late Harold and Genevieve DeWitt and grew into a remarkable woman who touched the lives of many.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Richard Sobieralski and her siblings, Duane DeWitt, Wathena "Wally" Dodge, Joan Mills and her twin brother, Jack DeWitt. Her legacy continues through her devoted children, Todd (Becky) Sobieralski Sr., and Dawn (Mike) Richards, as well as her adored grandchildren Todd (Blanca) Sobieralski Jr., Joe Sobieralski, Nathan (Kelly) Semrinec, Garrett (Lauren) Semrinec, Elliott (Rachel) Richards, and her cherished great-grandchildren Olivia Semrinec, Kennedy Semrinec, Kaylee Semrinec, Adalynn Semrinec, Madeline Richards, Victoria Sobieralski and Hannah Bradbury.

Jill worked various manufacturing jobs eventually landing at Schneider Vending, retiring after 12 years as a food service worker, known for her strong work ethic and love of cooking. She was a great friend to many and her genuine warmth is going to be missed.

Known for her "always requested" potato salad, Jill also loved to travel and shop. She took great pride in her home and yard. Friends and family often spoke of her meticulous nature and how she created a welcoming and beautiful space for all to enjoy. Her favorite times were those spent with her grandchildren, hosting sleepovers filled with games and movies, followed by her special breakfast of eggs and bacon. She also never missed attending her grandchildren's sporting events.

Her passing is a great loss to all that knew her. May her soul rest in peace as we celebrate the remarkable woman she was and the incredible legacy she leaves behind.

A time of visitation will take place on Sunday, July 27, 2025 from 5-6 p.m. at Brown Funeral Home, with services the following day, Monday July 28, 2025 beginning at 11 a.m. She will be laid to rest at Mission Hills Memorial Gardens

Special thanks to the caring staff at Brentwood and Heartland Hospice for the care they provided.

Those wishing to make a memorial donation have been asked to consider Alzheimer's Association 111 Sunnybrook Ct, South Bend, IN 46637.

Photo's condolences and memories can be left for her family at

BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com

Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Elaine E. Metzger

May 29, 1953 - July 20, 2025

Elaine Estrid Metzger was born on May 29, 1953 to Martin and Geri Flink and grew up in Park Forest, Illinois. She graduated from St Francis School of Nursing with an RN degree and began working in Indianapolis, where she met her future husband, Dan who was a medical student at the time. They were wed on September 18, 1977. After Dan did a Family Practice residency in South Bend, they moved to work at a remote small hospital in Sierra Leone, West Africa, where they served for 6 years. Elaine served in various capacities and was dearly loved by nationals and fellow missionaries. Upon retiring from the mission field, they moved to Niles, Michigan in 1990.

Besides being a homemaker and homeschool mom to their son, she was also Board President and later Interim Director of our local crisis pregnancy center (currently LifePlan). She also served as crew nurse for a 6 month stint on the Mercy Ship, was past director of Women's Ministry at Summit Church, and held various offices including President of the Four Flags Garden Club. The past several years, she has also worked as a nurse at Southwestern Medical Clinic in the same office as her husband. In spite of all her drive and accomplishments, she was never happier than when she was putzing around in her gardens or hiking with her husband and friends.

She passionately loved her Lord Jesus and was eager to share the Good News about Him with whomever was willing to listen. Several women have grown in their faith through her mentoring.

Having enjoyed good health for most of her 72 years, it came as a surprise when she was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer in May for which there is not currently any good treatment options. The family is grateful for the compassionate and helpful care provided by Hospice.

She is survived by her husband, Daniel; their son Jonathan; her brother Steve (Cathy) Flink; brother-in-law Harry (Catherine Metzger) and their wonderful children and grandchildren.

Family will gather Wednesday, July 23, 2025 at Halbritter/Wickens Funeral Home, 615 East Main Street, Niles from 5:00 until 8:00 p.m. Services will take place in Summit Church, 1700 W River Rd, Niles the next day, Thursday July 24, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

Memorial contributions can be made to Lifeplan crisis pregnancy center, though "flowers will be welcome".

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Joyce Bailey

February 18, 1935 - July 22, 2025

Joyce L. Bailey, 90, a lifelong resident of Dowagiac, passed away Tuesday evening, July 22, 2025, at The Timbers of Cass County.

She was born on February 18, 1935, in Niles, MI, daughter of the late Homer and Virginia (Foreman) Bailey. Joyce was a 1953 graduate of Dowagiac Union High School. She was very athletic and loved sports. She played softball for Dowagiac and won the All-Sports award for Dowagiac High School. Joyce was an avid Dowagiac Chieftain fan and was an over 55-year Dowagiac football season ticket holder.

She was employed by F.W. Woolworth Co in downtown Dowagiac for 43 years, until their closing in 1991. Joyce then began working for Dowagiac Union High School and McLauchlin-Clark Funeral Home (now Starks Family Funeral Homes) for many years until her retirement in 2016.

Surviving are her brother, Michael (Sandy Rank) Bailey; nieces and nephews, Julie (Jeff) Young, Mike (April) Bailey, Greg (Lauryn) Pruett, and Karen (Gary Peraino) Rutherford; grandnieces and grandnephews, Connor Bailey, Keagan Bailey, Shereé Irwin, Jennifer (Dan) Cook, Pamela (Jason) Olivarez, Mark (Kim) Pruett, Jodi Pruett, and Delaney (Riley) Rutherford; and several great-nieces and great-nephews.

Preceding her in death were longtime companion, Martha Bosworth; sister, Marcia Pruett, and niece, Linda Pruett.

Joyce's family would like to give a special thank you to Jason and Chrissy Grant for all the love, care, and support they provided Joyce. She truly loved their family. Also, much appreciation to the staff at The Timbers of Cass County for the loving care given to Joyce during her final years.

A service to celebrate Joyce's life will be held at 12:00 PM on Saturday, July 26, at Clark Chapel and Cremation Services, 405 Center St, Dowagiac, where friends may visit with her family from 11:00 AM until the time of service. Pastor Stacey Wilder of Calvary Bible Church will officiate. Private family inurnment will be in Riverside Cemetery, Dowagiac. Memorial contributions in Joyce's name may be directed to Dowagiac Athletic Boosters. To share a memory or message of condolence, please visit Joyce's personalized webpage at www.clarkch.com.

PAGEANT

Continued from page A1

really know what to expect," Gittens said. "It was really exciting getting to talk to everyone who participated and getting to root for people."

Judges made up of members of both courts chose five women and three men from the group of 23 to advance to the final round, where the winner was determined based on the level of applause received by their peers in attendance. When the dust settled, Carl Stevens and Elizabeth Heater were crowned Mr. and Miss Niles Brentwood.

Before her time at Brentwood, Heater was an avid farmer.

"It feels wonderful," Heater said. "I never expected anything like this."

Stevens served in the National Guard for 13 years. The honor was a pleasant surprise for Stevens, who has been with Brentwood for six months.

"Thank you for having us here," Stevens said. "The pageant committees did a nice job."

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

CROSSWORD ANSWER
From Page 5

L	A	C		S	L	E	W		S	P	A	M
A	B	A		P	A	T	E		I	R	M	A
V	E	R	T	I	C	A	L		R	A	I	L
A	T	T	I	R	E		T	R	E	N	D	
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C	O	U	P		A	C	L	U		T	E	A
O	N	M	E		R	E	A	M		H	E	M

SUDOKU ANSWER
From Page 5

5	4	9	7	8	2	1	3	6
7	1	2	3	5	6	8	4	9
6	3	8	9	1	4	7	2	5
8	9	1	6	7	3	4	5	2
2	5	4	1	9	8	6	7	3
3	6	7	4	2	5	9	8	1
4	2	6	8	3	9	5	1	7
9	7	5	2	4	1	3	6	8
1	8	3	5	6	7	2	9	4

Bring on the fair | *County Fair returns to Cassopolis Sunday*

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

LEADER FILE | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

CASSOPOLIS — The Cass County Fairgrounds is buzzing with life once again.

Residents from across the county are hard at work preparing for the annual Cass County Fair taking place from Sunday, July 27 to Saturday, Aug. 2.

The fair will host many 4-H club competitions, a carnival and grandstand entertainment. Festivities kick off at 5 p.m. Sunday, July 27 with the opening ceremonies and parade at the fair grandstands.

General gate admission is $9 for adults daily, $3 for children 6 to 12 and free for children under the age of six. Grandstand events are $5 if bought before July 27 and $10 after.

Throughout the fair, there will be a number of days during which certain individuals can enter for free or a reduced price.

Fair schedule

Exhibits and concessions open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

SUNDAY, July 27 – Free gate admission

- 7 a.m. Livestock may enter the fairgrounds
- 12 p.m. Entry of Open Class Floriculture & Horticulture (EC)
- 2 p.m. Youth Livestock Exhibits must be in place
- 2:30 p.m. Youth Still Exhibit Auction (CB)
- 4 p.m. Open Class Floriculture & Horticulture must be in place (EC)
- 5 p.m. Youth Draft Horse Evaluations (DHB)
- 5 p.m. FAIR OPENING CEREMONIES / PARADE (Grandstands will be cleared after parade) (GS)
- 7 p.m. Street legal pickup truck and semi tractor pull (GS)

MONDAY, July 28 – Veterans' Day

- 8 a.m. Youth & Pee Wee/Cloverbud Dairy Show (SA)
- 8 a.m. Youth Halter, Western & Ranch Showmanship, English Showmanship, Keyhole, Speed & Action (HR)
- 8:30 a.m. Youth & Pee Wee/Cloverbud Sheep Show (SA)
- 10 a.m. Youth & Pee Wee/Cloverbud Cat Show (CB)
- 3:30 p.m. Youth Dairy Feeder Steer Show (SA)
- 6 p.m. Draft Horse Pulling Contest (DHR)
- 7 p.m. TNT Derby (GS)

TUESDAY, July 29 – Kiddies' Day (6-12 Year Olds)

- 8 a.m. Scales open for Farm Tractor Pull (IF)
- 8 a.m. Youth Horse Showmanship Championships, English Equitation, English Pleasure, Hunter Over Fences, Flags, Cloverleaf (HR)
- 9 a.m. FARM TRACTOR & ANTIQUE TRACTOR PULL (GS)
- 9 a.m. Youth & Pee Wee/Cloverbud Swine Show (SA)
- 1 p.m. Kiddies' Day Program (1-2:30 p.m.) (CB)
- 2 p.m. Carnival Opens (MW)
- 5 p.m. Open & Youth Draft Horse Cart & Youth Team classes (DHR)
- 7 p.m. NTPA TRACTOR & TRUCK PULLS (GS)

WEDNESDAY, July 30 – Law Enforcement Day

- 8 a.m. Youth Horse & Pony – Western & Ranch Horsemanship, Western & Ranch Pleasure, Versatility (HR)
- 8 a.m. Youth & Pee Wee/Cloverbud Rabbit Show (Show Tent)
- 9 a.m. Youth Beef Show (SA)
- 10 a.m. Draft Horse Halter Classes (DHR)
- 1:30 p.m. Youth Goat Show (All classes except cart, obstacle, and costume) (SA)
- 3 p.m. Carnival Opens (MW)
- 6:30 p.m. Youth Draft Horse Showmanship, Decorating, Bareback Riding (DHR)
- 7 p.m. Super Kickers Rodeo (GS)

THURSDAY, July 31 – Senior Citizens' Day (60 and older)

- 8:30 a.m. Youth Horse & Pony Show – English/Western Riding, Reining, Free Style Reining, Kegs, Poles (HR)
- 9 a.m. Youth & Pee Wee/Cloverbud Poultry Show (Show Tent)
- 9 a.m. Senior Citizens Day Program – Presented by Cass County Council on Aging (CB)
- 10 a.m. Youth Market Livestock Auction – Beef, Dairy Feeder, Lambs, Milk, Swine (SA)

NOTE: Buyer Dinner will be provided during the auction with no organized break

- 3 p.m. Carnival Opens (MW)
- 3 p.m. Euchre Tournament (CB)
- 6 p.m. Draft Horse Utility Classes followed by Obstacle Class (DHR)
- 7 p.m. Night Moves – Bob Seger Tribute Band GS)

FRIDAY, Aug. 1 – Frontline Friday/Health Care Providers Day

- 8 a.m. Youth Horse & Pony – Trail, Dressage, Gymkhana Championships (HR)
- 10 a.m. Pedal Pull (IMPL. ROW)
- 10 a.m. Youth Livestock Judging Contest (SA)
- 1 p.m. Youth Interviews & Demonstrations (CB)
- 2 p.m. Ag Olympics (SA)
- 3 p.m. Carnival Opens (MW)
- 4 p.m. Youth Goat Costume, Cart, & Obstacle Show (following Ag Olympics) (Show Tent)
- 4 p.m. Small Animal Sweepstakes (SA)
- 6 p.m. Showmanship Sweepstakes (SA)
- 7 p.m. TNT DERBY (GS)
- At Dusk Fireworks (rain date: Saturday) (GS)

SATURDAY, Aug. 2 – Family $1 Day, Noon to 3 p.m.

- 9 a.m. Youth Horse & Pony – Costume, Cloverbud/Pee Wee, Award Ceremony, Last Ride (HR)
- 9 a.m. Youth Small Animal Auction – Rabbits, Eggs, Poultry, Goats (SA)
- 10 a.m. (Drive In) Open Draft & Light Draft Cart & Hitch Show (DHR)
- 12 noon Carnival Opens (MW)
- 3 p.m. Adult Alumni Horse Show Fundraiser (HR)
- 7 p.m. MUD MITTEN RACE SERIES – MUD TRUCK RACING (GS)
- 8:45 p.m. Home Arts Quilt Raffle Drawing (FO)

SUNDAY, Aug. 1

- Exhibits Released
- 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Release of 4-H Still Exhibits, Open Class Home Arts, Fine Arts, Horticulture, and Floriculture Exhibits (EC)

For more information, visit mycasscountyfair.com.

Two injured in two-vehicle Howard Township crash

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

HOWARD TOWNSHIP — Two people were injured Thursday in a two-vehicle crash in Howard Township, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 7:46 a.m., deputies from the Cass County Sheriff's Office responded to a two-vehicle crash at the intersection of Yankee Street and Carberry Road in Howard Township.

The investigation showed that a vehicle driven by 57-year-old Karen Stanton, of Osceola, Ind., was westbound on Yankee Street. A vehicle driven by 54-year-old Jovita Holly,of Niles, was northbound on Carberry Road and failed to stop at the stop sign, going into the intersection and crashing into the other vehicle.

Both Stanton and Holly were transported by SMCAS ambulance to South Bend Memorial Hospital for injuries sustained in the crash.

Assisting agencies were SMCAS Ambulance, Howard Township Fire Department, and Niles Fire Department. Drugs and alcohol are not believed to be a factor in this incident.

The incident remains under investigation.

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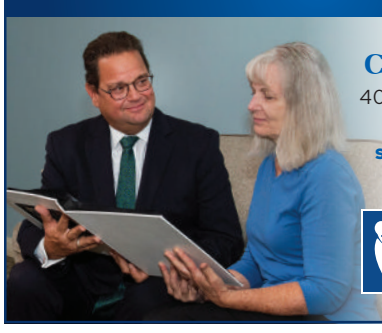
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APPROVES

Continued from page A1

not adjusted for changes in recent years. The change now makes official the match with Cass County's recognized holidays going forward. The only change to the current holiday schedule is the addition of Juneteenth on June 19th each year.

The Department of Public Works will now stock a year's supply of water treatment chemicals in an effort to minimize the cost of shipping. Water Superintendent Rich Low is now authorized to purchase chemicals in bulk at a cost not to exceed $2000 each year. The chemicals can be stored for several years before expiration.

Low also reported that several sections of the new iron filtration plant have stopped functioning well. All of the items are being replaced or repaired under warranty at no charge to the village.

Low will also be researching options for additional storage for village equipment, bringing the council comparisons between the costs of changing existing buildings to meet current needs versus that of building new structures.

The Planning Commission reported they are continuing work on possible Off-Road Vehicle and solicitation ordinances.

The council announced that the annual village audit will take place the week of August 4th. They also approved a public hearing at 6:15pm at the next council meeting to hear from residents regarding a resolution considering taking part in the Michigan State Housing Development Authority Community Development Block Grant, which can help bring funds to the village for home repairs. The next Village Council meeting will take place at 6 p.m. Monday, Aug. 18.

RAISES

Continued from page A1

Shores' channel shoreline to enjoy the event, and hundreds enjoyed the livestream on the United Way of Southwest Michigan YouTube & Facebook channels.

The fastest boat winner went to Whirlpool Corporation's "Knead for Speed," with the most Creative trophy awarded to Gast Manufacturing's "Tipsy," which did, in fact, topple over in the water before even making it to the starting line. The Captain's Bounty award for the most dollars raised went to Curi RMB Capital St. Joseph with $2,383 raised, while team "Dewey, Sinkem, and Howe" with their boat "Miss Creant" walked away with the trophy for People's Choice, collecting 43 donors that contributed to their team fundraising campaign total of $1,671.

Anna Murphy, President & CEO of United Way of Southwest Michigan, helped hand out the awards to the participants at the end of the event and said there were smiling faces all around, even if teams didn't make it past the finish (or the starting) line. "It's clear the community is absolutely in love with this event. We consider it one of the few ways we can connect with our community members, donors, sponsors, and impact partners all in one place. Getting these groups together to have some fun on the water and laugh is just priceless."

All dollars raised by boat registrations, sponsors, and people's choice votes will stay here in the community to benefit programs and impact partners of United Way of Southwest Michigan, which serves Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. This was also the biggest year of sponsorship for Rock the Boat, thanks to gifts from organizations like Honor Credit Union.

Honor's CEO, Scott McFarland, said, "It was incredible to see Rock the Boat raise even more funds this year, knowing that impact will make a real difference for families and individuals across Southwest Michigan. We're proud to support an event that brings people together and leaves a lasting impact well beyond race day. Giving back to our local communities has always been part of who we are at Honor, and our partnership with United Way of Southwest Michigan is a perfect example of that in action."

> "It was incredible to see Rock the Boat raise even more funds this year, knowing that impact will make a real difference for families and individuals across Southwest Michigan. We're proud to support an event that brings people together and leaves a lasting impact well beyond race day."
>
> **— Scott McFarland, Honor Credit Union CEO**

Teams participating this year included Ausra Kabota, Holtec Palisades, Honor Credit Union, The Herald-Palladium, four teams from Whirlpool Corporation, Lake Michigan College, Logan Autism Center, Team Dewey, Sinkum & Howe, two teams from Gast Manufacturing, Insurance Management Service, Region IV Area Agency On Aging, Kinexus Group, Curi RMB Capital, Walsworth, and Cook Nuclear Plant.

Rock the Boat was produced by the United Way of Southwest Michigan staff, with planning and execution assistance from Gravity Productions, JV Studios, and Mid-West Family Marketing & Media's "99.9 Y Country." The event was emceed by Our Lady of the Lake Athletic Director & WSJM Sports' Phil McDonald.

The event began as a United Way of Southwest Michigan campaign fundraiser by the Whirlpool Corporation in 2016, with United Way taking over the event in 2024 based on the very successful template of the past by Whirlpool's employee teams.

The event was patrolled on land and in the water by members of the Berrien County Sheriff's Department, with assistance from the US Coast Guard St. Joseph Station and St. Joseph Department of Public Safety. The Inn at Harbor Shores donates space for the event to take place, and Brian's Marina loans safety and boating equipment for the race. Whirlpool's Advanced Development & Innovation Team provided a new addition to the safety process this year by building a boat return ramp utilizing donated parts and supplies courtesy of Big C Lumber and Godfrey Pontoon Boats. In-kind donations were also given from The Herald-Palladium, Lakeshore Public Schools, and MailMax.

Food trucks participating at the event included Benton Harbor's "The Brick House" and "Ben's Pretzels," as well as Lost Coast Shave Ice, and KT's Rasoi. The Inn at Harbor Shores also served drinks for the event. All food vendors committed to donate a portion of their sales to United Way of Southwest Michigan.

The event is Presented by Honor Credit Union, with major support from Silver Beach Pizza, Gast Manufacturing, Michigan Works! Berrien, Cass, Van Buren, Whirlpool Corporation, BluCat Consulting, 99.9 Y Country, and JV Studios. Supporting sponsors include the Inn at Harbor Shores, the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber, Lake Michigan College, and Curi RMB Capital, with additional thanks to United Container Company, Competitive Edge, Brian's Marina, Pepsi, Gravity Productions, Feeding America West Michigan, Big C Lumber, and Godfrey Pontoon Boats.

2026 event registration will open in early Spring for boaters to begin planning their craft designs. Watch RockTheBoatForUnitedWay.com and sign up for alerts.

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BASEBALL

Niles sent two players to compete in the Prep Baseball Senior Future Games...

Niles sends two to all-star game

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Submitted | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

EMERSON, Ga. — Niles sent two players to compete in the Prep Baseball Senior Future Games Wednesday at the LakePoint Sports Complex in Emerson, Georgia.

Jaxen Racht and Brenden Olsen represented Niles baseball at the Senior Future Games, an exclusive two-day, invitation-only event for the best Class of 2026 prospects from across the Prep Baseball Report Coverage Area.

WRESTLING

Nate named State Athletic Director of the Year

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Nate

DOWAGIAC — A local athletic director was recognized for his contributions to growing the sport of wrestling.

Dowagiac Athletic Director Brent Nate has been honored with the title of State Athletic Director of the Year by the Michigan Wrestling Association. The recognition comes as a result of a nomination by Wrestling Coach Colin Burandt.

The Special Awards program was established by the MWA in 2017 to recognize outstanding individuals at the grassroots level that make a difference for children that participate in the sport of wrestling.

The MWA will formally acknowledge Nate's contributions with an award during their annual Hall of Fame banquet on November 8, 2025.

HOMETOWN HERO

Ethan Saylor wins 51st annual Steve's Run 5K

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — A familiar face finished first in the 51st annual Steve's Run Friday, July 18 in downtown Dowagiac.

Ethan Saylor of Dowagiac crossed the finish line with a winning time of 16:29 in front of his hometown crowd. Shawn Bell placed second with a time of 17:15 and Braden Bachmann was third in 17:39.

"It was good," Ethan said of his race. "Earlier it was cool and cloudy but the sun came and it got warm."

Elizabeth Carroll, a high school junior from Burlingame, California, was the women's overall winner with a time of 22:34. Logan Thibodeau won the men's 10K with a clocking of 37:48 and Daniella Romero was the women's winner with a time of 50:54.

The money raised through the 5K run/walk, 10K and fun run benefit cancer research and scholarships.

Ethan is the middle Saylor son between Alec, who he ran with at Southwestern Michigan College in the 2021-2022 season, helping to restart and immediately lift the program back into a top-20 national ranking after a 25-year hiatus. Ethan then continued at SMC in 2022-2023, graduated in May 2023 and has run for two years at Goshen College, an NAIA program in Goshen, Indiana. His youngest brother, Owen, will run for the Roadrunners this fall.

Alec won the race's 10K in 2022 and Owen earned a runner-up 5K finish in 2022.

Ethan enjoyed competing in front of the hometown crowd.

"It was amazing," he said. "Usually I take this time and use it for training but this year I'm done with college. I wanted to come out here and run the local race and enjoy it."

While Carroll lives almost 2,300 miles from Dowagiac in California, she often spends part of her summers with her grandparents in Marcellus. She said her grandfather is familiar with the annual race and signed her family up.

"He said 'why don't we all sign up,'" she said. "I have a ton of family running out here today."

Caroll competes for her high school's track and cross country teams. Her personal best 5K time is 18:56, which she ran at the California state meet.

"I just love running so honestly this was so great that this was out here today," she said. "I always try to run on vacation."

Both Saylor and Caroll enjoyed the Steve's Run experience and exploring downtown Dowagiac.

"It means a lot to my family," Saylor said. "Saylor's Pizza, [SMC coach Zac Sartori] is amazing; he is a big inspiration and a really good coach. It's awesome to be out here. I love the community, I love it all."

"It was so much fun," she said. "I had no idea about the festival. We were surprised to show up to see rides and food and so much energy and fun. This is great."

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

TOP PHOTOS: Hundreds of racers competed in the 51st annual Steve's Run Friday, July 18 in downtown Dowagiac. LEFT: Dowagiac's Ethan Saylor took first place in the 51st annual Steve's Run in downtown Dowagiac. FAR LEFT: Elizabeth Carroll, a high school junior from Burlingame, California, was the women's overall winner with a time of 22:34.

GOLF

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

ABOVE: From left: John Kessick, Larry Larson, Chris Gessinger.
RIGHT: Monica Schmidt, Candy Seals, Mary Jane Lorance.

Lorance, Larson win Niles City Golf Tournament

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — Mary Jane Lorance is a champion once again.

Lorance edged former champion Candy Seals by two strokes last weekend to win the Niles City Golf Tournament's Women's Division title at Plym Park Golf Course. Monica Schmidt finished three shots behind Lorance in third place.

Lorance finished with a two-day total of 180. Seals shot 182 while Schmidt shot 183.

On the men's side, Larry Larson fired a 146 to win the Men's Division. John Kessick placed second with 152 and Chris Gessinger and Rick Lewis tied for third place with a score of 154.

The 2025 Niles City Golf Tournament will wrap up Saturday and Sunday with the A, B and C Flights at Plym Park.

BASEBALL

Dowagiac youth slugger's hot streak continues

COMMUNITY REPORT

COLOMA — After a four-home run performance in four games last weekend, Nolan Lawrence is showing no signs of cooling down.

Over the past four games, the U-10 Dowagiac All Stars slugger has continued to punish the baseball this summer. In the last week alone, Lawrence went 9-of-11 with five home runs in four games and notching six runs, 10 RBIs, and two doubles.

Lawrence is batting almost .700 with nine home runs and has accounted for 36 of his team's 159 runs scored in 19 games.

The team finishes their All Stars season next week with a tournament in Howard Township.

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

BASEBALL

Hoover, Ostrander help WMU baseball earn Team Academic Excellence Award

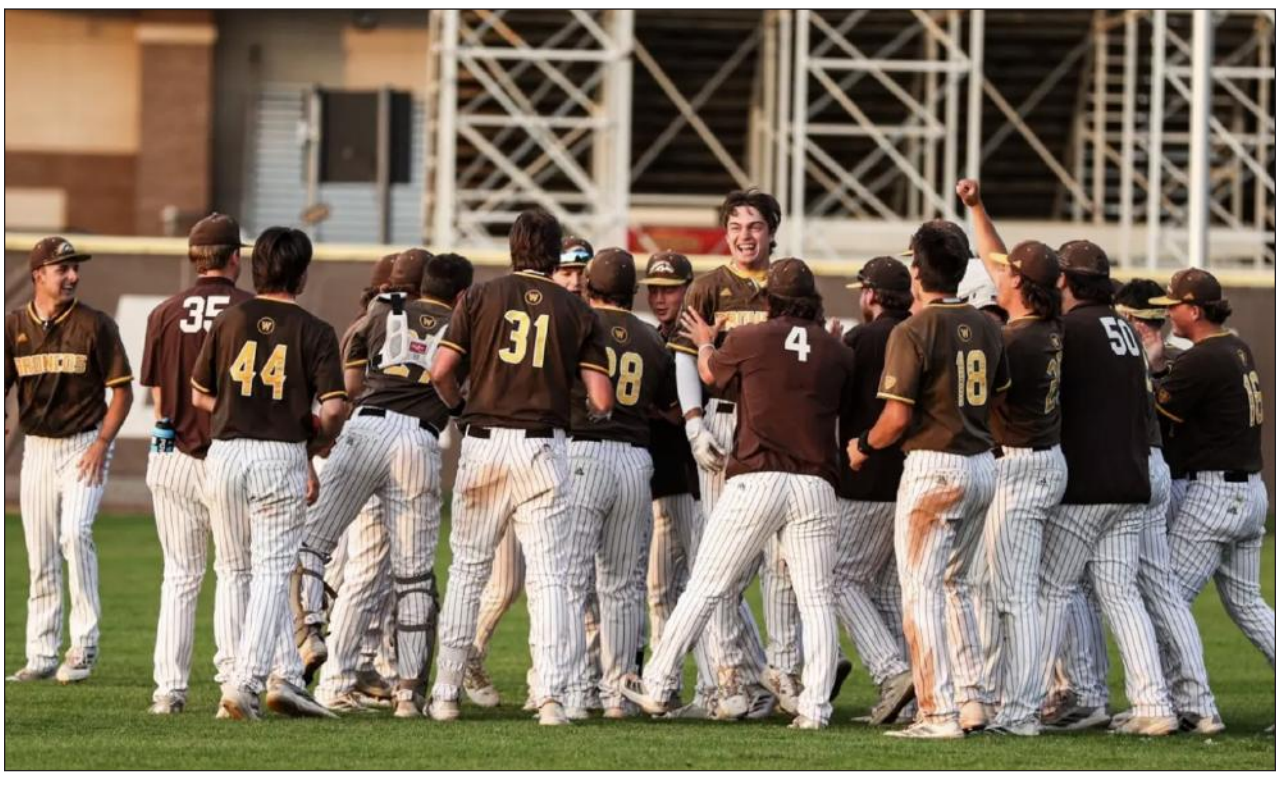


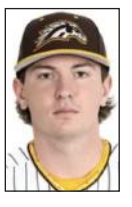
PHOTO SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Courtesy of WMU Athletics

KALAMAZOO — For the eighth consecutive year, the Western Michigan baseball team has earned the American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA) Team Academic Excellence Award, presented by Sports Attack, for the 2024-25 academic year.

The award recognizes programs coached by ABCA members whose team GPA is 3.0 or higher for the entire 2024-25 academic year.

Head coach Billy Gernon's squad posted a 3.57 cumulative GPA for the year, with a 3.60 GPA in the fall semester followed up by a 3.54 GPA in the spring to extend the program's streak of consecutive semesters with a team GPA of 3.5 or higher to 15 in a row. Across the two semesters, WMU boasted a total of 14 4.0 GPAs. In the fall, 25 Broncos made the Dean's List, with 20 then making the Dean's List in the spring.



Hoover

Ostrander

Western Michigan led the conference with 14 Academic All-MAC selections, with Turner Doran, Jake Gernon, Brendan Harrity, Matt Hoover, Cooper Hums, Tanner Mally, Michael Maloney, Grady Mee, Dylan Nevar, Connor Ostrander, Lucas Rick, Joe Shapiro, Avery Thielman and DJ Thompson all earning the honor. Additionally, Reese Gaber, Mally, Maloney, Ty McKinstry and Nevar were each named College Sports Communicators Academic All-District® selections.

FOOTBALL

Freeman Selected to IBJ Media Indiana 250

Courtesy of Notre Dame Athletics

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Dick Corbett Head Football Coach Marcus Freeman has been selected to IBJ Media's Indiana 250, recognizing the 250 most influential and impactful leaders in the state of Indiana.

Now in its fourth year, the Indiana 250 list recognizes individuals ranging across several sectors, spanning business, law, government, universities, community organizations and more. The list is compiled through a monthslong process by the executives, editors and newsroom staffs at IBJ Media's three publications: Indianapolis Business Journal, Inside INdiana Business and Indiana Lawyer.

Freeman, beginning his fourth season at the helm of the Notre Dame program, is known across the college sports industry as an effective leader and active member of the local community. He has earned several accolades for his leadership and team success, in addition to his dedicated community service.

He enters the 2025 season after leading Notre Dame to a National Championship appearance and a 14-2 record in 2024, with a final Associated Press ranking of No. 2. He was honored with several coaching awards during the 2024 season, including: the Dodd Trophy; the Paul "Bear" Bryant Coach of the Year Award; the George Munger College Coach of the Year Award; the National Coalition of Minority Football Coaches College Coach of the Year honor; and the Ted Ginn Sr. Coach of the Year Award from the National Alliance of African American Athletes. He has already been named to the watch list for the 2025 Dodd Trophy.

He was also honored in 2024 as the honorary head coach for the 2024 AFCA Allstate Good Works Team, which recognizes community impact and involvement. Freeman is an avid, consistent supporter of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Michiana, an organization which helps patients and their families during extended hospital stays. Each Friday before home games during the season, Freeman visits the patients and their families, bringing along student-athletes who would like to join him. The group delivers lunches and brings Notre Dame gifts and games to the patients. However, the most important part of the visit is the time spent with each patient, getting to know them and playing games.

Freeman has also taken part in numerous charitable engagements, including visiting local schools such as St. Adalbert Catholic School in South Bend, where he surprised students with tickets to the spring football game, and speaking at philanthropic events, such as Erin's House for Grieving Children, which supports families who have experienced a death.

He joins several representatives of the sports industry on the list, including Caitlin Clark of the Indiana Fever, Carlie Irsay-Gordon of the Indianapolis Colts and Tyrese Haliburton of the Indiana Pacers.

NEWS

Commissioners discuss potential state mental health service cuts

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

ST. JOSEPH — An upcoming change in how mental health authorities are funded could mean less care for people and less local control for area organizations.

Berrien County Commissioners heard concerns on the changes being instituted at the state level by Riverwood Director Ric Compton. He noted that Riverwood has served thousands of people in its 50 years of existence in Berrien County. Riverwood provides outpatient therapy and other services for the developmentally disabled and those suffering from mental illness, substance use disorders and other problems.

Compton told commissioners that the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services announced in March that they were changing how mental health services are funded and governed in the state. The switch from the current system to the new plan is expected to take place Oct. 1, 2026.

One part of the restructuring involves consolidating 10 Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans around the state to just three. Riverwood is currently part of the Southwest Michigan Mental Health and Behavior Authority and would be part of a much larger authority covering most of the Lower Peninsula outside of Detroit.

He said the change will mean that those who are currently served by mental health authorities-an estimated 400,000 or more statewide-would have a difficult time navigating the new system to get the care they need. In addition, there would be less local representation on the PIHP level by organizations like Riverwood.

He told commissioners that efforts are underway to stop the MDHHS changes from going into effect, from lobbying legislators to pressure the MDHHS to forming coalitions to fight the changes in court. He said one bright spot is that next year is an election year for governor and the state may be hesitant to implement the new controversial rules.

County Board Chairman McKinley "Mac" Elliott said that the MDHHS move "defies logic in terms of a business mind" as larger organizations are known to be less efficient. "I hope someone can get the governor's ear," he said. "This seems to be a dumb plan, dumb with a capital D."

The county board is expected to vote on a resolution opposing the state changes regarding mental health services at their Aug. 7 meeting.

Also Thursday, commissioners heard the annual report from the Area Agency on Aging and later approved a resolution in support of their plans. Amanda Drew and Christine VanLandingham outlined what the organization is doing now and what it plans to do in the future.

The Area Agency on Aging serves senior citizens in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties. Drew noted that 28.6 percent of the tri-county population is over 60 which is a higher percentage than the state and nation. The agency's 2026 goals are improving access to services, promoting social connectedness and expanding education and awareness.

The county board meeting featured action on a number of resolutions including an honorary resolution for retiring County Financial Services Director Doug James. James is retiring this week after 16 years of service with the county.

Berrien County Administrator Brian Dissette said that the process has already started to find James' replacement and that James has agreed to stay on part time until his replacement is found.

The county board will not meet next Thursday, July 31 as it is a fifth Thursday. The board's next meeting will be Aug. 7 at the MSU Extension Center on Hillandale Road in Benton Township. It will start at 6 p.m. and is the last scheduled night meeting for the year.

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Miscellaneous Services

AUCTION
Long guns, handguns, vehicles, tools, watches, jewelry, antiques, Mason/Shriner collectibles, farm items, tractor, boats, trailers, much more! Saturday, 08-09-25, 10 a.m. in Kent City, MI. Full listing/directions, info at MerrittAuctionService.com. 616-754-9437.

August Online Auction: Coins, Collectibles & Antiques! Features vintage swords, jars, glass, signs, tool chest, tools, jewelry, more. Bidding through 08-11-25. Visit NarhiAuctions.com for catalog updates. Need an auction? Call 810-266-6474.

Vast collection in Clare to bid on, through 08-13-25! Antiques, collectibles, tools, unique vintage items, including potbelly stove, clocks, pottery, horse buggy, much more. Don't miss out! Bid. SherwoodAuctionServiceLLC.com. Questions? Call 1-800-835-0495.

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Public Notices

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ONTWA TOWNSHIP, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN

GARVER LAKE AND CHANNELS RENEWAL OF SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT

TO: ALL RECORD OWNERS OF, OR PARTIES INTEREST IN, LAND IN THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT DESCRIBED BELOW

Properties abutting Garver Lake, its Channels, and deeded assess there to, in Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Board of Trustees, Ontwa, County of Cass will meet on Monday, August 11, 2025 at the Ontwa Township Hall, Edwardsburg, MI, 6:00 p.m. to hear any objections to the Assessment Roll as reported to the Township Board pursuant to Public Act 188. Each listed parcel in the special assessment district will be assessed an amount to vary from $0 to $150 per year, for a ten (10) year period starting in 2025. The amount to be assessed each year will be determined at the September Township Board of Trustees meeting each year.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE Garver Lake has had a Special Assessment District (SAD) in place for the eradication or control of aquatic weeds and plants, for the last 5 years for infestations of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) that have been managed by various methods over the years that have enabled the lake to remain navigable and enjoyed for fishing and recreational purposes.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE as provided for by Public Act 188 of 1954, a Township Board can initiate action to RENEW a SAD that is expiring.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that any person may appear at the Public Hearing and protest the inclusion of their property on the proposed assessment roll. The Hearing, which is called pursuant to the provisions of Public Act 188 as amended, provides that the inclusion on a special assessment roll must be protested at the Hearing held for the purpose of confirming the special assessment roll, before the Michigan Tax Tribunal may acquire jurisdiction. Appearance and protest of the special assessment, at the time and place of review, is required in order to appeal the amount of the special assessment to the Michigan Tax Tribunal. An owner of, or party with interest in, property to be assessed, or his or her agent, may appear in person to protest the Special Assessment, or may protest the special assessment by letter filed with the Township Clerk, Ontwa Township, Edwardsburg, MI 49112, prior to the time of review, in which case personal appearance is not required If the special assessment is protested as provided above, the owner or any party having an interest in the real property may file a written appeal of the special assessment with the Michigan Tax Tribunal within 30 days after the confirmation of the special assessment roll has been published in a newspaper of general circulation.

The Township Board shall maintain a record of parties who appear to protest at the hearing. If the hearing is terminated or adjourned for the day before the party is provided the opportunity to be heard, a party whose appearance was recorded shall be considered to have protested the assessment roll in person.

The Township will provide auxiliary aids or services to individuals with disabilities. Persons needing such services should contact the office of the Township Clerk not less than four days prior to the hearing.

090-009-039-00	090-009-078-00	090-140-011-00	090-140-035-00	090-155-003-00	090-180-018-00
090-009-040-00	090-015-024-00	090-140-012-00	090-140-036-00	090-155-004-00	090-180-019-00
090-009-043-00	090-015-025-00	090-140-013-00	090-140-037-00	090-155-005-00	090-180-020-00
090-009-048-01	090-015-026-00	090-140-014-00	090-140-038-01	090-155-007-00	090-180-021-00
090-009-049-00	090-015-027-00	090-140-015-00	090-140-040-00	090-155-009-00	090-180-022-00
090-009-050-00	090-015-028-00	090-140-016-00	090-140-041-00	090-180-001-00	090-180-023-00
090-009-053-00	090-015-029-00	090-140-018-02	090-140-042-00	090-180-002-00	090-180-024-00
090-009-054-00	090-015-042-00	090-140-019-01	090-140-043-00	090-180-003-00	090-180-025-00
090-009-056-01	090-015-043-00	090-140-022-00	090-140-044-00	090-180-004-00	090-180-026-00
090-009-057-00	090-015-044-00	090-140-023-00	090-140-045-00	090-180-005-00	090-180-027-00
090-009-058-01	090-015-045-00	090-140-024-00	090-140-046-00	090-180-006-00	090-180-028-00
090-009-059-00	090-015-046-00	090-140-025-00	090-140-047-01	090-180-007-00	090-180-029-00
090-009-061-00	090-016-002-00	090-140-026-00	090-140-189-01	090-180-008-00	090-180-030-00
090-009-071-01	090-140-001-00	090-140-027-00	090-140-191-00	090-180-009-00	090-180-031-00
090-009-072-00	090-140-002-00	090-140-028-00	090-140-192-00	090-180-010-01	090-180-032-10
090-009-073-00	090-140-005-01	090-140-029-00	090-140-193-01	090-180-013-00	090-180-033-00
090-009-074-03	090-140-007-00	090-140-030-00	090-140-195-01	090-180-014-00	090-235-001-00
090-009-075-00	090-140-008-00	090-140-031-01	090-140-196-00	090-180-015-00	090-235-002-00
090-009-076-00	090-140-009-00	090-140-033-00	090-155-001-00	090-180-016-00	090-235-003-00
090-009-077-00	090-140-010-00	090-140-034-00	090-155-002-00	090-180-017-00	

Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

SECTION 00 11 13
ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS
VILLAGE OF CASSOPOLIS
WASTEWATER CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS

Sealed Bids for the Village of Cassopolis Wastewater Capacity Improvements will be received by the Village of Cassopolis at 121 N. Disbrow St, Cassopolis, MI 49031. Bids will be received and opened for a single prime Contract on Friday, August 8, 2025 at 10:00 AM.
The project includes road construction, sidewalk and curb ramp construction, replacement of sanitary sewers, construction of sanitary force main (open trench and horizontal directional drill), placement of air release and sewage cleanout manholes, and the restoration of any areas disturbed by construction activities.
Bids shall be made on a unit price basis. Sealed bids bearing the Project name and Contract(s) included with the bid, as well as the name and address of the bidder shall be submitted to Emilie LaGrow at 121 N. Disbrow St, Cassopolis, MI 49031.
Information and Bidding Documents for the Project will be available on Friday, July 18, 2025 and can be found at the following designated website: http://www.abonmarche.com/bids. Hard copies are available from the Issuing Office of Abonmarche, 95 West Main Street, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 (269) 927-2295. The fee for obtaining hard copy documents is Fifty Dollars ($50.00). An additional Fifteen Dollars ($15.00) will be charged for each contract package requiring shipping. General Specifications, description, and conditions upon which the bid proposal is to be based are on

Public Notices

file for examination at the Issuing Office.
A certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond in an amount equal to five percent (5%) of the total amount of the bid, made payable to the Village of Cassopolis will be required with each bid as security for the proper execution of the contract. A 100% Labor, Material, and Performance Bond will be required of successful bidder.
No bid shall be withdrawn for a period of ninety (90) days after the scheduled opening without consent of the OWNER. The Owner reserves the right to reject any bids, waive any informality in bidding or to accept the bid, consistent with law, which best serves the interest of the Owner.
All inquiries shall be directed to Abonmarche, attn.: Zach Hauersperger at via email: zhauersperger@abonmarche.com. Questions must be entitled "Wastewater Capacity Improvements - RFI."
Owner:
Village of Cassopolis
Emilie LaGrow
manager@cassopolis-mi.us
(269) 445-8648

ENGINEER:
Abonmarche Consultants, Inc.
Chad Knip, P.E.
cknip@abonmarche.com
(574) 314-1018

Niles Daily Star:
July 26 and Aug. 2, 2025
BIDS

PUBLIC NOTICE

INVITATION TO BID
CITY OF NILES
UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

Sealed proposals will be received by the City of Niles, Michigan in the office of the City Clerk until **2:00 P.M. Local Time, on Wednesday, August 27, 2025**. Electronic Proposals will not be accepted. At that date, time, and location the proposals will be opened in the City Hall 3 rd floor Conference Room and read aloud for the following project in the City of Niles:

Lead Service Line Replacements

The proposal and contract forms as well as the plans and specifications under which the work will be done are on file and may be examined at the Utilities Department, City Hall, 333 N. 2nd St., Niles, Michigan 49120, (269) 683-4700, ext. 2070. Copies thereof may be obtained from the Utilities Manager.
All bidders are required to sign a certification that they will comply with all Federal and State non- discrimination laws and regulations.
A certified check or bidder's bond in an amount of not less than five percent (5%) of the amount of the proposal will be required with each proposal.
The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive irregularities in proposals and to accept the proposal, which in the opinion of the City Council is most advantageous to the City.
No bid shall be withdrawn after the opening of bids for a period of thirty (30) days after the scheduled time of receiving bids.
CITY OF NILES
Madison Mosher
Interim Utilities Manager

Niles Daily Star:
July 26, 2025
BIDS

PUBLIC NOTICE

COUNTY OF BERRIEN
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON THE ADOPTION OF A BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE COUNTY OF BERRIEN PURSUANT TO AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF ACT 381 OF THE PUBLIC ACTS OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN OF 1996, AS AMENDED

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT a public hearing shall be held before the Berrien County Board of Commissioners' Committee of the Whole on August 14th, 2025 at 8:30am in the County Board Chambers, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan. The purpose of the hearing is to consider whether to approve a Brownfield Redevelopment Plan submitted on behalf of Allen Edwin Homes and pertaining to property located within the City of Watervliet, Michigan, having the following tax identification number: 11-78-0023-0069-06-6.
The proposed brownfield plan would allow the developer of the property to be reimbursed for eligible costs incurred to prepare the brownfield property for redevelopment. Eligible costs include environmental and/or site preparation costs, public and private infrastructure necessary to support the development and housing development activities.
All information related to the proposed plan is available for public inspection at the offices of the Berrien County Community Development Department, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on weekdays. Any aspect of the proposed plan amendment may be discussed at the public hearing and all interested persons will be given an opportunity to be heard.

Niles Daily Star:
July 26, 2025
HEARING

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING
NILES DISTRICT LIBRARY BOARD
AUGUST 19, 2025
AT 4:45 P.M.
NILES DISTRICT LIBRARY
620 EAST MAIN STREET,
NILES, MICHIGAN, 49120

The Niles District Library Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed library budget for the fiscal year October 1, 2025 – September 31, 2026, at the Niles District Library located at 620 East Main Street, Niles, Michigan, 49120 on August 19, 2025 at 4:45 pm. **The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing.**
A copy of the budget, including the proposed property tax millage rates, is available for public inspection at the Niles District Library located at 620 East Main Street, Niles, Michigan, 49120 during business hours and on the library website https://nileslibrary.com/ no later than August 12, 2025.
The Niles District Library must hold a public hearing before the final adoption of the budget.
Any interested person will be given the opportunity to be heard at the public hearing regarding the proposed budget.
The Niles District Library Board will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting upon 3 days' notice to the Library Board. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Library by writing or calling the following: Niles District Library, Attn: Administration, 620 East Main Street, Niles, Michigan, 49120; (269) 683-8545 option 4; administration@nileslibrary.net
Dated: July 21, 2025
Tifanni Dash
Board Secretary
Niles District Library
620 East Main Street
Niles, MI, 49120
(269) 683-8545

Niles Daily Star:
July 26, 2024
BUDGET HEARING

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE THAT CERTAIN SPECIAL EDUCATION INFORMATION IS NO LONGER NEEDED AND NOTICE OF INTENT TO DESTROY RECORDS

Niles Community Schools has in its possession a number of records for the students that received special education services and which ended due to graduation or student reached the age of 26 years as of 2017-2018. These services may have included testing to determine special education eligibility and other services developed in meetings called special education IEPCS. The IEPC services may have included various kinds of therapies (e.g., occupational, physical, speech, individual or group therapy with a school psychologist or school social worker), consultation (e.g., teacher consultant services for visually impaired, hearing impaired, learning disabled, or mentally impaired) and special education needs, including mental, emotional, hearing, visual, physical/health, and speech impairments, learning disabilities and autism. For monitoring purposes, the school must retain certain information for six years after a student moves away or is no longer eligible for special education services (e.g., graduates or the student reaches age 26). The Niles Community Schools no longer needs the information contained in the special education files on student services performed and ending due to graduation or student reached the age of 26 years as of 2017-2018 and intends to destroy these education records 30 days from the date of publication of this notice, ie., on August 29, 2025. If you are: A student who received Special Education services in Niles Community Schools which ended during 2017-2018 due to graduation or student reached the age of 26; A parent/guardian of a student who received/ended special education services in Niles Community Schools sometime during 2017-2018 and the student will not be 18 until after Aug 31, 2025; and/or you either desire to review the record/obtain a copy prior to destruction, or you have a question regarding this notice and its application to you, please call Erik Haskins; Director of Special Education at 269-683-0757 ext. 10028.

Niles Daily Star:
July 26, 2025
DESTRUCTION OF RECORDS

Put your ad here
call 269-591-6105.

PUBLIC NOTICE

HOWARD TOWNSHIP
CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
JULY 15, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Township Hall.

BOARD ACTION
Approved Meeting Agenda.
Approved the minutes of the 06/17/25 Board Meeting
Approved the financial report with an ending balance of 1,689,650.76 including a CD
Approved the payment of bills through July 15, 2025
Approved the departmental reports
Approved Rezone of parcel 14-020-019-007-00
Public Comment occurred
Adjourn the meeting at 7:30p.m.

Niles Daily Star:
July 26, 2025
SYNOPSIS 07.15.25

Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

CITY OF NILES

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT THE City Council of the City of Niles, Michigan, on July 14, 2025, adopted Ordinance No. 515, which provides for the removal of telecommunications facilities from City - owned poles when such poles are no longer in use by the City, to secure the health, safety, and general welfare of the residents and property owners of the City of Niles, Berrien County, Michigan.

ORDINANCE # 515

Effective Date: August 3, 2025
An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 82, Article II of the City of Niles Code of Ordinances to provide for the removal of telecommunications facilities from the City - owned poles when such poles are no longer in use by the City, to secure the health, safety, and general welfare of the residents and property owners of the City of Niles, Berrien County, Michigan.
Notice is further given that a true copy of the Ordinance is available to the public to be obtained or inspected during business hours at the office of the City Clerk, 333 North Second Street, Niles, Michigan. This notice is published pursuant to the provisions of MCL 117.3(k).
Tina Bergman, City Clerk

Niles Daily Star:
July 26, 2025
ORDINANCE # 515

Looking for a home?

Look in our classifieds section and learn of great deals for you and your family.

Legal Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF INDIANA
ST. JOSEPH COUNTY
SS:
IN THE ST. JOSEPH PROBATE COURT
CAUSE NUMBER: 71J01-2501-JT-96
IN RE THE TERMINATION OF THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP OF: Baby Boy Betts, (a Safe Haven Infant), AND UNNAMED PARENT 1 UNNAMED PARENT 2
SUMMONS FOR SERVICE BY PUBLICATION & NOTICE OF TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS HEARING
NOTICE TO UNNAMED PARENT

To: The unnamed putative parent(s) of a Baby Boy Betts, a male infant that was voluntarily surrendered on July 10, 2025, in St. Joseph County, Indiana and born on approximately July 10, 2025, or the person who claims to be a parent of the infant,
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a petition to terminate the parent-child relationship was filed in the office of the clerk of the St. Joseph County Probate Court, 1000 S. Michigan St., South Bend, IN 46601.
YOU MUST RESPOND If the unnamed putative parent seeks to contest the petition to terminate the parent-child relationship of the infant, the unnamed putative parent must file a motion to contest the petition in accordance with IC 31-35-1.5-8 in the above-named court within twenty-eight (28) days after the date of service of this notice.
This notice may be served by publication.
You are further notified that if the unnamed putative parent does not file a motion to contest the petition within thirty (30) days after service of this notice, the above-named court shall hear and determine the petition to terminate the parent-child relationship.
You are further notified that if the unnamed putative parent does not file a motion to contest the petition within thirty (30) days after service of this notice, the unnamed putative parent's consent is irrevocably implied and the unnamed putative parent loses the right to contest the petition to terminate the parent-child relationship or the validity of the unnamed putative parent's implied consent to the termination of the parent-child relationship. The unnamed putative parent loses the right to establish a biological relationship with the child in Indiana or any other jurisdiction. Nothing anyone else says to the unnamed putative parent of the infant relieves the unnamed putative parent of his or her obligations under this notice.
Under Indiana law, a putative parent is a person who claims that he or she may be the father or mother of an infant who has been voluntarily surrendered but who has not yet been legally proven to be the child's father or mother.
This notice complies with IC 31-35-1.5-5 but does not exhaustively set forth the unnamed putative parent's legal obligations under the Indiana adoption statutes. A person being served with this notice should consult the Indiana adoption statutes.
Amy Rolfes, Clerk of St. Joseph County

Niles Daily Star:
July 26, Aug. 2 and 9, 2025
71J01-2507-JT-96

Legal Notices

LEGAL NOTICE

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
BERRIEN COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate
CASE NO and JUDGE
2025-0439- DE-R
HON BRIAN S. BERGER

Court address 811 Port Street Floor 4 St. Joseph, MI 49085
Court telephone no. 269-983-7111

Estate of Marlene Mast, Deceased
Date of birth: 08/19/1942

TO ALL CREDITORS:**
NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Marlene Mast, died May 18, 2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Cami Lynn Coleman, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 811 Port Street Floor 4 St. Joseph, MI 49085 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

July 26, 2025

Cami Lynn Coleman
10852 Rangeline Rd. Berrien Springs, MI 49103
269-471-9015

James J. Mollison, P17884, 4 South Lincoln Avenue, Niles, MI 49120, 269-684-7600

Niles Daily Star: July 26, 2025
EST/MAST, M.

Looking for a home?

Look in our classifieds section and learn of great deals for you and your family.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ONTWA TOWNSHIP, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN
EAGLE LAKE AND CHANNELS RENEWAL OF SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT
TO: ALL RECORD OWNERS OF, OR PARTIES INTEREST IN, LAND IN THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT DESCRIBED BELOW

Properties abutting Eagle Lake, its Channels, and deeded assess there to, in Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Board of Trustees, Ontwa, County of Cass will meet on Monday, August 11, 2025 at the Ontwa Township Hall, Edwardsburg, MI, 6:00 p.m. to hear any objections to the Assessment Roll as reported to the Township Board pursuant to Public Act 188. Each listed parcel in the special assessment district will be assessed an amount to vary from $0 to $150 per year, for a ten (10) year period starting in 2025. The amount to be assessed each year will be determined at the September Township Board of Trustees meeting each year.
PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE Eagle Lake has had a Special Assessment District (SAD) in place for the eradication or control of aquatic weeds and plants, for the last 10 years, respectively, for infestations of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) that have been managed by various methods over the years that have enabled the lake to remain navigable and enjoyed for fishing and recreational purposes.
PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE as provided for by Public Act 188 of 1954, a Township Board can initiate action to RENEW a SAD that is expiring.
PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that any person may appear at the Public Hearing and protest the inclusion of their property on the proposed assessment roll. The Hearing, which is called pursuant to the provisions of Public Act 188 as amended, provides that the inclusion on a special assessment roll must be protested at the Hearing held for the purpose of confirming the special assessment roll, before the Michigan Tax Tribunal may acquire jurisdiction. Appearance and protest of the special assessment, at the time and place of review, is required in order to appeal the amount of the special assessment to the Michigan Tax Tribunal. An owner of, or party with interest in, property to be assessed, or his or her agent, may appear in person to protest the Special Assessment, or may protest the special assessment by letter filed with the Township Clerk, Ontwa Township, Edwardsburg, MI 49112, prior to the time of review, in which case personal appearance is not required If the special assessment is protested as provided above, the owner or any party having an interest in the real property may file a written appeal of the special assessment with the Michigan Tax Tribunal within 30 days after the confirmation of the special assessment roll has been published in a newspaper of general circulation.
The Township Board shall maintain a record of parties who appear to protest at the hearing. If the hearing is terminated or adjourned for the day before the party is provided the opportunity to be heard, a party whose appearance was recorded shall be considered to have protested the assessment roll in person.
The Township will provide auxiliary aids or services to individuals with disabilities. Persons needing such services should contact the office of the Township Clerk not less than four days prior to the hearing.

090-002-049-00	090-065-005-00	090-095-004-00	090-145-007-00	090-160-010-00	090-245-002-00
090-003-006-00	090-065-007-00	090-095-005-00	090-145-008-00	090-160-012-00	090-245-003-00
090-003-007-00	090-065-008-00	090-095-006-00	090-145-009-00	090-165-001-01	090-245-004-00
090-003-017-00	090-065-009-00	090-095-007-00	090-145-010-00	090-165-002-01	090-245-005-00
090-003-018-00	090-065-010-00	090-095-008-00	090-145-011-00	090-165-003-00	090-245-006-00
090-003-068-00	090-065-011-00	090-095-009-00	090-145-012-00	090-165-004-00	090-245-007-00
090-003-069-00	090-070-001-00	090-095-010-00	090-145-013-01	090-220-003-01	090-245-008-10
090-003-070-00	090-070-002-00	090-095-011-00	090-145-015-00	090-220-005-01	090-245-009-01
090-003-071-00	090-070-003-00	090-095-012-00	090-145-016-00	090-220-006-00	090-245-010-00
090-003-091-00	090-070-004-00	090-095-013-00	090-145-017-00	090-220-006-50	090-245-011-00
090-003-093-00	090-070-005-00	090-095-014-00	090-145-018-00	090-220-007-01	090-245-012-00
090-003-094-00	090-070-006-00	090-095-015-00	090-145-019-00	090-220-008-00	090-245-013-00
090-003-099-00	090-070-007-00	090-095-016-00	090-145-020-00	090-220-010-00	090-245-014-00
090-003-100-00	090-070-008-00	090-095-017-00	090-145-021-00	090-220-011-00	090-245-015-00
090-003-101-00	090-070-009-00	090-095-018-01	090-145-022-00	090-220-012-00	090-245-016-00
090-003-103-01	090-070-010-00	090-095-020-00	090-145-023-00	090-245-001-00	090-260-001-00
090-003-103-10	090-070-011-00	090-095-021-00	090-145-024-00	090-245-002-00	090-260-002-00
090-003-103-20	090-070-012-00	090-095-022-00	090-145-025-00	090-245-003-00	090-260-003-00
090-003-103-30	090-070-013-00	090-095-023-00	090-145-026-00	090-245-004-00	090-260-004-00
090-003-104-01	090-070-014-00	090-095-024-05	090-145-027-00	090-245-005-00	090-260-005-00
090-003-106-03	090-070-015-00	090-095-025-01	090-145-028-00	090-245-006-00	090-260-006-00
090-003-106-10	090-070-016-00	090-095-027-00	090-145-030-00	090-245-007-00	090-260-007-00
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090-003-106-30	090-070-018-00	090-095-029-00	090-145-033-00	090-245-009-01	090-260-009-00
090-003-107-01	090-070-019-00	090-095-030-00	090-145-034-00	090-245-010-00	090-260-010-00
090-003-108-00	090-070-021-00	090-095-031-00	090-145-036-00	090-245-011-00	090-260-011-00
090-003-109-00	090-070-022-00	090-095-032-00	090-145-037-00	090-245-012-00	090-260-012-00
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090-003-111-00	090-070-024-00	090-095-034-00	090-145-039-00	090-245-014-00	090-285-003-00
090-003-112-00	090-070-025-00	090-095-035-00	090-145-040-00	090-245-015-00	090-285-005-00
090-003-113-00	090-070-026-00	090-095-036-01	090-150-001-00	090-245-016-00	090-285-006-00
090-003-114-01	090-070-027-00	090-095-036-10	090-150-002-00	090-260-001-00	090-285-007-00
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090-003-115-00	090-085-007-00	090-120-009-00	090-150-004-00	090-260-003-00	090-285-009-01
090-003-117-01	090-085-008-00	090-125-001-00	090-150-006-00	090-260-004-00	090-285-011-00
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090-010-010-00	090-085-014-00	090-125-007-00	090-150-012-00	090-260-010-00	090-285-014-50
090-010-018-00	090-085-015-00	090-130-001-00	090-150-013-00	090-260-011-00	090-285-015-00
090-010-019-00	090-090-001-00	090-130-003-00	090-150-014-00	090-260-012-00	090-385-001-00
090-010-020-00	090-090-003-00	090-130-004-00	090-150-017-00	090-285-002-00	090-385-002-00
090-010-021-00	090-090-004-00	090-130-006-00	090-150-018-00	090-285-003-00	090-385-002-00
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090-060-003-00	090-090-007-00	090-130-010-00	090-150-021-00	090-285-007-00	090-385-005-00
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090-065-001-00	090-090-016-00	090-145-002-00	090-160-005-00	090-220-008-00	090-390-010-00
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090-065-006-00	090-095-003-00	090-145-006-00	090-160-009-00	090-245-001-00	

DEALS ON WHEELS

0 DOWN DELIVERS!

ON THE SPOT FINANCING

Selling Fast!
Buy Now
Before Prices go Higher

2013 VOLKSWAGEN JETTA TDI PREMIUM
JLeather, roof, 45 miles per gallon!

Only $8,900

2019 NISSAN VERSA
Just in!! 35mpg, fully serviced and ready to go

Only $9,900

2013 FORD FIESTA TITANIUM
Power moonroof, leather in mint condition

Only $9,900

2012 TOYOTA PRIUS
Just in!! Gets over 50 miles per gallon!!

Only $10,900

2016 FORD ESCAPE TITANIUM AWD
All the toys!!

Only $12,900

2018 KIA RIO HATCHBACK
Just in!! Only 53,000 miles

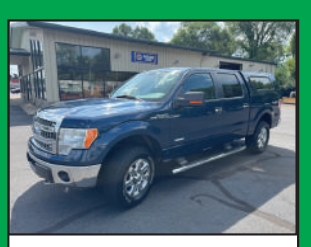
Only $12,900

PONTIAC SOLSTICE
Low miles, great shape…Nice car to drive to car shows

Only $13,900

2019 DODGE GRAND CARAVAN
Get you mini-van for the mini-mum

Only $13,900



2013 FORD F-150 CREW CAB XLT 4 X 4
Sur is nice fer a low price!

Only $16,900

TOYOTA FJ CRUISER
Like finding a needle in a haystack

Only $17,777

2021 DODGE CHALLENGER SXT
Just in!! Get it while it's here

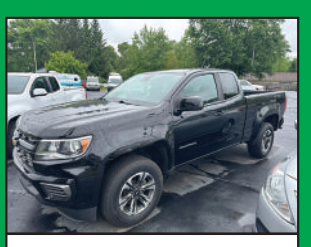
Only $19,900

1999 FORD F-250 CLUB CAB XLT
This is a one owner in mint condition with low miles and very sought after 7.3 diesel

Only $19,900

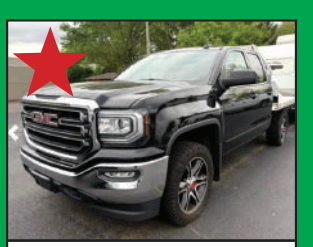
2018 CHEVY EQUINOX PREMIER AWD
Diesel. 45 miles per gallon

Only $21,900



2020 CHEVY COLORADO EX CAB 4 X 4
Showroom new, low miles

Only $23,900

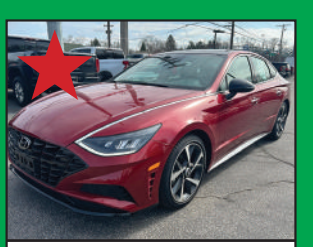


2017 GMC SIERRA FLATBED 4 X 4
Perfect for lawn business

Only $24,900

2019 FORD TRANSIT HIGHROOF
Like new with low miles

Only $24,900



2023 HYUNDAI SONATA SEL
Like new with only 4,000 miles!

Only $24,900

2019 HYUNDAI KONA IRONMAN
Extremely rare. Only 1 of 500. Will be a collector's item

Only $24,900

2019 DODGE DURANGO SXT 4 X 4
Only 31,000 miles and like new

Only $24,900

2018 RAM 5500 CHASSIS CREW 4 X 4
Diesel, full power, fully serviced

Only $27,900

2003 CHEVY SSR
SUPER RARE
Only 43,000 miles

Only $29,900

2020 NISSAN ARMADA 4 X 4
Big ol rig!!

Only $29,900

2020 BUICK ENCLAVE AVENIR AWD
Every option, over $60k new. Half price!!

Only $29,900

2016 FORD F-250 XLT 4 X 4
Crew cab, long box
Diesel, Low miles

Only $29,900

2023 HONDA RIDGELINE RTL 4 X 4
Just in!! Every option. Save thousands!

Only $31,900

2024 CHEVY EQUINOX RS AWD
Just in!! 8,000 miles with every option!!

Only $33,900

2020 CHEVY SILVERADO CREW Z-71
Oh So Purdy!

Only $39,900

2022 TOYOTA TACOMA BEAST
OFF LEASE, one owner with EVERY option
Only 13,000 miles

Only $43,900

2022 CHEVY SILVERADO CREW LTZ
Just in!! Off lease, one owner 19,000 miles. Over $75k new

Only $49,900

2024 FORD F-350 CREW XLT 4 X 4
Duallie, Diesel, Mint!!

Only $59,900

SEE A STAR IT'S A 1 OWNER CAR

269-783-3325 • M-51 DOWAGIAC

BEST OF MICHIANA | 2025 RESULTS

2025 READER'S CHOICE CONTEST
BEST of the BEST
Leader Publications
MICHIANA'S FAVORITE BUSINESSES

LeaderPublications

TWISTED BEE
PREMIUM CANNABIS
twistedbee.co
2 YEARS RUNNING

Back-to-Back Champs!

Twisted Bee has officially been voted Best of the Best two years in a row - and it's all thanks to YOU! We're proud to serve the Dowagiac community and beyond with high standards, good vibes, and the best crew around.
With the largest selection in the area, there's something for everyone at Twisted Bee - and we're just getting started.
Thanks for making us your go-to spot!

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Thank You for Choosing
CARMI Design Group as Michiana's

"BEST Architectural Building Design"

Defying the Status Quo with
SIGNATURE Architectural Designs

At CARMI Design Group, we know Architecture has the power to delight, inspire, and transform. Since 1990, our Award Winning Architectural team has designed and managed the construction of $175 Million worth of projects in southwest Michigan and Indiana.

Our philosophy of Strong Partnerships and Precise Architecture is the motivating factor in our design process, as we create beautiful and functional architectural plans incorporating our client's budget and vision. We can assist with everything from interior design services, to planning your new space, construction administration and management, and even teach your team members to build 3D models through one of our hands-on REVIT training courses.

Let's make something beautiful together.

Located in Downtown Niles, MI

(269) 663-5073

Connect with us: CARMI.BIZ

WELCOME TO THE 2025 BEST OF THE BEST READER'S CHOICE CONTEST RESULTS!

Whether it's the best place for a romantic dinner, reliable places for health care or financial services or a myriad of other services, we all love to seek advice from our friends, family and online reviews to find great products and services available to us in our community.

If you want to know what your neighbors in Southwest Michigan and beyond are recommending in more than 150 categories, you've come to the right place.

Welcome to the 2025 Best of the Best Reader's Choice Contest feature section sponsored by Leader Publications. including a listing of the "best" businesses in Michiana according to you, the readers of the Niles Daily Star, Dowagiac Daily News, The Leader, Edwardsburg Argus and the Cassopolis Vigilant.

Credibility is important to our readers and businesses when engaging in this special feature. Our newspaper does not provide names of businesses for readers to choose from during the nomination process, and that adds to the authenticity of this annual poll. The reader must provide a name of a business or organization and from there the top five vote-getters move onto the voting round. The field is then narrowed down to the top three and those names are provided in this highly anticipated feature.

Businesses are pleased to be recognized by the public. Treating your customers right and having great name recognition is helpful for a business to make the winner's list. Name recognition with positive feedback is what drives the winning ballot choices. While there are no cash prizes, business owners who rank among the best receive a "Best of" sticker to place in their window which indicates that business is a recipient of the award for that given year. This coveted sticker is usually placed on the front door by the business owner. Some businesses proudly display many years of winning stickers. Undoubtedly, these businesses are doing something right for their customers on a consistent basis.

We know great customer service is a key component when it comes to being a successful business as well as making sure they (potential customers) know you, before they need you. That's called top-of-mind-awareness and businesses that have great "TOMA" generally succeed. Consistently promoting a businesses' name, products and services is one tried and true method of finding and keeping customers.

COMMUNITY

BEST PLACE TO WORK IN BUCHANAN

- **Winner: Smoke Vision Care**
- Finalist: Honor Credit Union
- Finalist: Redbud Roots

BEST PLACE TO WORK IN CASSOPOLIS

- **Winner: Honor Credit Union**
- Finalist: Midwest Energy & Communications
- Finalist: Hydro Aluminum

BEST PLACE TO WORK IN DOWAGIAC

- **Winner: Twisted Bee**
- Finalist: Honor Credit Union
- Finalist: Smoke Vision Care

BEST PLACE TO WORK IN EDWARDSBURG

- **Winner: Flat Rock Grill**
- Finalist: Honor Credit Union
- Finalist: Circle Federal Credit Union

BEST PLACE TO WORK IN NILES

- **Winner: Brentwood at Niles Senior Living**
- Finalist: Drive & Shine
- Finalist: Honor Credit Union

CHURCH

- **Winner: Hope Community Church**
- Finalist: Summit Church
- Finalist: Holy Maternity Of Mary Catholic Church

Thank you for voting us

☑Best Real Estate Agency
☑Best Realtor

Download on the App Store

Local Knowledge.
Legendary Results.

JASONSTROUDTEAM.COM

ELLSBURY GROUP
REAL ESTATE EXPERTS

ALL BRANDS HEATING AND COOLING

Thank you for voting us the best Heating & Cooling Company!

2025 Reader's Choice Contest — Best of the Best — Leader Publications — Michiana's Favorite Businesses

Air Conditioning & Heating Services

From full HVAC installations to air conditioning repair in Southwest Michigan, taking care of your home and family starts with taking care of your HVAC systems. Whether you're in the middle of a Michigan winter or the relentless heat of a long summer, your home should be an escape from the elements. But if the temperature inside starts to feel like the temperature outside, it's time to think about installing a new or repairing your existing heating and cooling system. Whether you are looking for an Air Conditioning contractor or a professional that knows about furnace repair, we offer professional services at affordable prices.

Licensed and insured
Fast, convenient, and catered services to meet your specific needs.

Quality services at competitive prices.

Servicing Dowagiac, Kalamazoo, Portage, and surrounding areas

ALL BRANDS HEATING & COOLING — HVAC

92196 CR 690., Dowagiac (Sister Lakes)
269-782-8900

NON-PROFIT

- **Winner: Hidden Acres Safe Haven**
- Finalist: Fernwood Botanical Garden
- Finalist: Kari Cares Grief Support Center

DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT VENUE

- **Winner: Bee Crafty**
- Finalist: Niles Scream Park
- Finalist: The Underground Laugh Lounge

ASIAN FOOD

- **Winner: Ho Ping Garden**
- Finalist: Hot Wok
- Finalist: China Garden Restaurant

BAKERY

- **Winner: 2nd & Main Coffeehouse**
- Finalist: Divine Dough Co
- Finalist: The Baker's Rhapsody

BBQ

- **Winner: Curly Q's BBQ**
- Finalist: Jim's Smokin' Cafe
- Finalist: MISSION BBQ

Voted #1
Insurance Agency
in Michiana

SERVING ALL OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN AND NORTHERN INDIANA

2025 READER'S CHOICE CONTEST BEST of the BEST Leader Publications MICHIANA'S FAVORITE BUSINESSES

REDBUD
INSURANCE SERVICES, LLC.

WE MAKE GETTING AN INSURANCE QUOTE Easy

1. USING YOUR SMART DEVICE, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.
2. ENTER YOUR CURRENT CARRIER LOGIN INFORMATION & SUBMIT.

It's that simple... Sit back. Relax.

ALL THE POLICY DOCUMENTATION NEEDED FOR A COMPETITIVE QUOTE HAS BEEN SECURELY SENT TO ONE OF OUR EXPERIENCED AGENTS TO BEGIN WORKING ON YOUR PERSONALIZED QUOTES. ONE OF OUR KNOWLEDGEABLE PROFESSIONALS WILL BE IN TOUCH SOON!

'Rooted in Your Community'

Questions?
Give us a call today!
(269) 695-3000

Redbud Insurance Services: A Wholly Owned Subsidiary of Honor Credit Union

BEST RESTAURANT IN BUCHANAN

- **Winner: Hilltop's Creekside Cafe**
- Finalist: McCoy Creek Tavern
- Finalist: Thistledown & Row

BEST RESTAURANT IN CASSOPOLIS

- **Winner: O'Neals SmokeHouse**
- Finalist: Lindy's Restaurant
- Finalist: The Twirl

BEST RESTAURANT IN DOWAGIAC

- **Winner: Sister Lakes Brewing Company**
- Finalist: Wounded Minnow Saloon
- Finalist: Oak and Ash BBQ & Catering

BEST RESTAURANT IN EDWARDSBURG

- **Winner: Flat Rock Grill**
- Finalist: Fat Cam's at Garver Lake
- Finalist: Divine Dough Co

BEST RESTAURANT IN NILES

- **Winner: Iron Shoe Distillery**
- Finalist: Pizza Transit
- Finalist: Prime Table Restaurant

BREAKFAST

- **Winner: Rise N Shine Cafe**
- Finalist: Prime Table Restaurant
- Finalist: 2nd & Main Coffeehouse

BREWERY

- **Winner: Niles Brewing Company**
- Finalist: Sister Lakes Brewing Company
- Finalist: River Saint Joe

BURGER

- **Winner: Iron Shoe Distillery**
- Finalist: The Tavern, Niles
- Finalist: Sister Lakes Brewing Company

CANNABIS

- **Winner: Twisted Bee**
- Finalist: Green Stem
- Finalist: Primitiv Group

CASINO

- **Winner: Four Winds Casino New Buffalo**
- Finalist: Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana
- Finalist: Blue Chip Casino Hotel Spa

WOODLAND TERRACE
A Dockerty Family Senior Living Community

Thank you for voting us one of the best Senior Living Facilities!

Independent, Assisted, and Memory Care

Surrounded by rolling meadows, beautiful trees, ponds and wetlands, Woodland Terrace of Longmeadow is Southwestern Michigan's finest Senior Living Residence in Niles, Michigan. Right off of US 31 at Niles-Buchanan Road, it is conveniently located within the Longmeadow development. Our location allows you to be close to a variety of medical amenities and professional services.

13 Longmeadow Village Drive, Niles, MI 49120 • 269-683-7900

THANK YOU for voting us one of Michiana's favorite businesses.

THIS ZOO IS FOR YOU

POTAWATOMI ZOO .ORG

Visit our website or follow us to learn more!

CATERING
- **Winner: Jim's Smokin' Cafe**
- Finalist: SugarEllas Catering
- Finalist: Sister Lakes Brewing Company

CHOCOLATE AND DESSERTS
- **Winner: Veni's Sweet Shop**
- Finalist: Caruso Candy & Soda Fountain
- Finalist: The Baker's Rhapsody

COFFEE OR TEA
- **Winner: Brew Ha Ha**
- Finalist: 2nd & Main Coffeehouse
- Finalist: Apothica Teas

DISTILLERY
- **Winner: Iron Shoe Distillery**
- Finalist: Journeyman Distillery
- Finalist: Decatur Stillhouse

FAMILY RESTAURANT
- **Winner: Prime Table Restaurant**
- Finalist: Pizza Transit
- Finalist: Iron Shoe Distillery

FRENCH FRIES
- **Winner: Iron Shoe Distillery**
- Finalist: Hot Dogs Plus
- Finalist: Wings Etc.

GARDEN OR PARK
- **Winner: Fernwood Botanical Garden**
- Finalist: Potawatomi Zoo
- Finalist: St. Patrick's County Park

GOLF COURSE
- **Winner: Brookwood Golf Course**
- Finalist: Indian Lake Hills Golf Course
- Finalist: Diamond Lake Golf Club

ICE CREAM OR FROZEN YOGURT
- **Winner: Chunks Ice Cream**
- Finalist: Swirlyz
- Finalist: Slope Frozen Treats

INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE
- **Winner: Bee Crafty**
- Finalist: Niles Scream Park
- Finalist: Nitro Zone

ITALIAN FOOD

- **Winner: Pizza Transit**
- Finalist: Wood Fire Trattoria
- Finalist: Capri Italian Restaurant Granger

MEXICAN FOOD

- **Winner: Taqueria Don Chepe**
- Finalist: El Amigo Pepe
- Finalist: Hacienda Mexican Restaurants

OUTDOOR DINING

- **Winner: Iron Shoe Distillery**
- Finalist: Sister Lakes Brewing Company
- Finalist: Front Street Pizza Pub

PIZZA

- **Winner: Pizza Transit**
- Finalist: Milanos - Buchanan
- Finalist: Front Street Pizza Pub

RESTAURANT SERVER NAME/BUSINESS

- **Winner: Iron Shoe Distillery/Dianne Watson**
- Finalist: Paula Peacock/ Iron Shoe Distillery
- Finalist: Charline Fortuna/ Old tavern inn

ROMANTIC DINNER

- **Winner: The Embers at Signal Point**
- Finalist: Capri Italian Restaurant
- Finalist: Thistledown & Row

SANDWICH

- **Winner: Old Tavern Inn**
- Finalist: Iron Shoe Distillery
- Finalist: Firehouse Subs

SEAFOOD

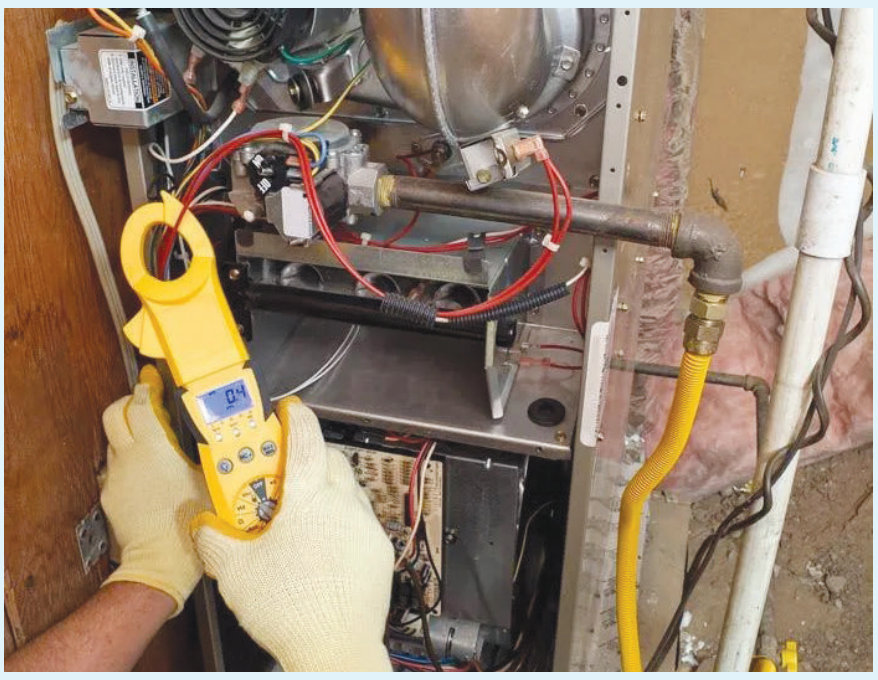
- **Winner: Iron Shoe Distillery**
- Finalist: Thistledown & Row
- Finalist: Jim's Smokin' Cafe

STEAK

- **Winner: Copper Rock Steakhouse South Bend**
- Finalist: Jim's Smokin' Cafe
- Finalist: Cascade - South Bend IN

VEGETARIAN FOOD

- **Winner: Iron Shoe Distillery**
- Finalist: Thistledown & Row
- Finalist: Pizza Transit



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WINERY

- **Winner: Round Barn Winery & Estate**
- Finalist: Tabor Hill Winery & Restaurant
- Finalist: Dablon Winery & Vineyards
-

WINGS

- **Winner: Wings Etc.**
- Finalist: Iron Shoe Distillery
- Finalist: Pizza Transit

EDUCATION

COLLEGE

- **Winner: Southwestern Michigan College**
- Finalist: Lake Michigan College
- Finalist: Kalamazoo Valley Community College

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You voted Red Shoe Realty and our very own Cloë Mittan as Best of the Best Real Estate Agency & Best Realtor 2025!
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Best Realtor
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To all of my amazing clients your trust, support, and belief in me mean the world. Being voted Best Realtor is such an honor, and it reflects your confidence in my ability to guide you through one of life's biggest decisions. I'm truly grateful to be part of your journey.
~ Cloë Mittan
There's No Place Like Home
Jen Inman
Rachael Inman
Nancy Scheetz
Jade Fortier
Kati Luke
Jan Luke
Cloë Mittan

DAY CARE

- **Winner: Little Bucks Childcare**
- Finalist: Northside Child Development Center
- Finalist: Niles-Buchanan YMCA

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- **Winner: Brandywine Elementary**
- Finalist: Merritt Elementary School
- Finalist: Patrick Hamilton School

HIGH SCHOOL

- **Winner: Buchanan High School**
- Finalist: Brandywine High School
- Finalist: Eau Claire High School

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LIBRARY

- **Winner: Buchanan District Library**
- Finalist: Niles District Library
- Finalist: Dowagiac District Library

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- **Winner: Buchanan Middle School**
- Finalist: Brandywine Middle/ Senior High School
- Finalist: Dowagiac Middle School

HEALTH & WELLNESS

ASSISTED LIVING

- **Winner: Brentwood at Niles Senior Living**
- Finalist: Chalet Of Niles
- Finalist: Forest Glen Assisted Living

AUDIOLOGIST

- **Winner: Michiana Hearing, Inc.**
- Finalist: Dr. Campbell's Hearing Solutions
- Finalist: Tricia Moreno, Au.D.

CARDIOVASCULAR CARE

- **Winner: Bronson advanced Cardiac Healthcare**
- Finalist: Cardiology Southwest PC - Dr. Huggett
- Finalist: Goshen Heart & Vascular Center
- Finalist: Great Lakes Heart & Vascular: Mihalik Scott A

CHIROPRACTOR

- **Winner: Pure Motion Chiropractic**
- Finalist: Complete Chiropractic
- Finalist: Alternative Wellness Center

DENTIST'S OFFICE

- **Winner: Four Flags Family Dentistry**
- Finalist: Niles Dental Associates, Kyle McGill DDS
- Finalist: Beyond Smiles

DERMATOLOGIST

- **Winner: Stonegate Dermatology and Medical Spa**
- Finalist: Cardinal Dermatology
- Finalist: Trayam Dermatology

FRIENDS, FAMILY, COMMUNITY

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EYE CARE PROVIDER

- **Winner: Smoke Vision Care**
- Finalist: Great Lakes Eye Care
- Finalist: Southwest Vision Center
- Finalist: Niles Vision Clinic

FAMILY DOCTOR'S OFFICE

- **Winner: Southwestern Medical Clinic**
- Finalist: Cassopolis Family Clinic Network
- Finalist: Corewell Health Southwest Medical Clinic

FITNESS CLASSES

- **Winner: Redbud Fitness & Lifestyle Center**
- Finalist: SLR Pilates
- Finalist: Niles-Buchanan YMCA

GERIATRIC CARE

- **Winner: Brentwood at Niles Senior Living**
- Finalist: North Woods Village at Edison Lakes
- Finalist: Riveridge Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center

HEARING AID
- **Winner: AudioNova Hearing Care**
- Finalist: West Michigan Hearing Specialists
- Finalist: Beltone Hearing Aid Center

HOSPITAL
- **Winner: Corewell Health Lakeland Hospital**
- Finalist: Memorial Hospital
- Finalist: Bronson Healthcare

LOCAL GYM
- **Winner: Redbud Fitness & Lifestyle Center**
- Finalist: Niles-Buchanan YMCA
- Finalist: Fitstop 24 Niles

MEDICAL FACILITY
- **Winner: Brentwood at Niles Senior Living**
- Finalist: Riveridge Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center
- Finalist: Beacon Medical Group Main Street

ONCOLOGY CARE
- **Winner: Corewell Health Lakeland Hospital**
- Marie Yeager Cancer Center
- Finalist: Bronson Oncology & Hematology Specialists - Kalamazoo
- Finalist: Beacon Medical Group

ORTHODONTIST
- **Winner: Harrington Orthodontics**
- Finalist: Niles Dental Associates, Kyle McGill DDS
- Finalist: Brace Yourself Orthodontics - South Bend

ORTHOPEDICS
- **Winner: South Bend Orthopaedics**
- Finalist: Mishawaka Orthopedics & Sports Medicine
- Finalist: OSMC Goshen
- Finalist: I-Spine Ortho & Sports Care

PHARMACY
- **Winner: NILES WELLCARE PHARMACY**
- Finalist: Martin's Super Markets
- Finalist: Walgreens

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
- **Winner: Redbud Health Services**
- Finalist: McDonald Physical Therapy & Sports Rehabilitation Center
- Finalist: Brentwood at Niles Senior Living

PODIATRIST

- **Winner: Niles Foot Clinic PC**
- Finalist: Moore Patricia a DPM
- Finalist: Matthew Dinnon, DPM

SENIOR LIVING FACILITY

- **Winner: Brentwood at Niles Senior Living**
- Finalist: Woodland Terrace at Longmeadow
- Finalist: Riveridge Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center

SPORTS MEDICINE

- **Winner: South Bend Orthopaedics**
- Finalist: Sport Track Physical Therapy and Human Performance
- Finalist: Corewell Health Lakeland Hospitals Orthopedic Rehabilitation

URGENT CARE

- **Winner: Corewell Health Lakeland Hospitals Niles Hospital**
- Finalist: WellNow Urgent Care
- Finalist: Physicians Urgent Care

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

- **Winner: Bucktown Nutrition**
- Finalist: Redbud Fitness & Lifestyle Center
- Finalist: Corewell Health Weight Loss Clinic - Niles

WOMEN'S CLINIC

- **Winner: Pur Aesthetics and Wellness**
- Finalist: Redbud Health Services
- Finalist: South Shore Women's Health Care

LIFESTYLE & SERVICES

ACCOUNTANT

- **Winner: Balanced Accounting & Tax Services**
- Finalist: Mike's Tax Service
- Finalist: Wooden Accounting

ARCHITECTURAL BUILDING DESIGN

- **Winner: CARMI Design Group**
- Finalist: Wightman - Kalamazoo
- Finalist: Furkis Architectural Consulting

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ATTORNEY
- **Winner: Duncan & Associates PLLC**
- Finalist: Landgraf Jr Robert L
- Finalist: Peter Smith Niles Mi

AUTO BODY SHOP
- **Winner: Clark's Service**
- Finalist: Jim D's Body Shop
- Finalist: Precision Auto & Body

AUTO SERVICES
- **Winner: Clark's Service**
- Finalist: Grant Street Auto, Niles
- Finalist: Millin Automotive Repair LLC

BANK
- **Winner: Huntington Bank**
- Finalist: 1st Source Bank
- Finalist: Fifth Third Bank & ATM

BARBER
- **Winner: Bakeman Barbers**
- Finalist: Joes Barber & Style Shoppe
- Finalist: Up Next Barber And Beauty Salon

CAR LOAN
- **Winner: Honor Credit Union**
- Finalist: United Federal Credit Union
- Finalist: Circle Federal Credit Union

CAR WASH
- **Winner: Drive & Shine**
- Finalist: 5th Street Car Wash Niles, Mi
- Finalist: Schilling's Auto Wash

CARPET CLEANING SERVICE
- **Winner: Elite Clean**
- Finalist: Michiana Sanitation Specialist
- Finalist: A2Z Carpet Cleaning

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CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
- **Winner: Affordable Lawn Care Solutions**
- Finalist: Astrong Construction LLC
- Finalist: 2C Construction

CREDIT UNION
- **Winner: Honor Credit Union**
- Finalist: United Federal Credit Union
- Finalist: Dowagiac Area Federal Credit Union

DANCE STUDIO
- **Winner: Miss Michele and Co.**
- Finalist: Green Dance Academy
- Finalist: Tutu School Granger

FUNERAL HOME
- **Winner: Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services**
- Finalist: Starks Family Funeral Homes & Cremation Services
- Starks & Menchinger Chapel
- Finalist: Hoven Funeral Home

HAIR SALON
- **Winner: Luminous Hair Spa**
- Finalist: Beauty Bar 201
- Finalist: Autumn Leigh

HAIR STYLIST NAME/BUSINESS
- **Winner: Libby Grace Hair**
- Finalist: Color with Lex
- Finalist: Maddie.Hair. Official

HEATING & COOLING SERVICE
- **Winner: All Brands Heating and Cooling / Sister Lakes**
- Finalist: Michiana Heating & Air Conditioning
- Finalist: Ace Heating and Air Conditioning

INSURANCE AGENT
- **Winner: Redbud Insurance Services LLC**
- Finalist: Jessica Massey - State Farm Insurance Agent
- Finalist: Patsy Sears - State Farm Insurance Agent

INVESTMENT FIRM
- **Winner: Gregory A Surber, Edward Jones**
- Finalist: Golden Years Financial Advisors
- Finalist: John Seculoff, Edward Jones

IT OR COMPUTER SHOP
- **Winner: Custom Computer Company, CO.**
- Finalist: C&P Distributing
- Finalist: K's Computer Repair

LANDSCAPING/ LAWN CARE
- **Winner: Affordable Lawn Care Solutions**
- Finalist: Four Seasons Lawn Care and Snow Plowing
- Finalist: Grass Pro Lawn Service

MORTGAGE LENDER
- **Winner: Honor Credit Union**
- Finalist: United Federal Credit Union
- Finalist: Sturgis Bank

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NAIL SALON
- **Winner: Luminous Hair Spa**
- Finalist: Beauty Bar 201
- Finalist: Nailskenz †McKenzie Hassle

OIL CHANGE
- **Winner: Drive & Shine**
- Finalist: Dave's Garage Niles, Mi
- Finalist: Zolman's Best One Tire & Auto Care

PET GROOMER
- **Winner: Blue Paw Pet Spa**
- Finalist: Oodles of Poodles Dog Grooming
- Finalist: Shampoochie Dog Salon

PHOTOGRAPHER
- **Winner: Danielle Sergio Photography**
- Finalist: Blue Print Photography
- Finalist: Off The Wahl Photography

PLUMBER
- **Winner: SC Drain Cleaning**
- Finalist: Niezgodski Plumbing
- Finalist: Advantage Plumbing, Inc.

REAL ESTATE AGENCY
- **Winner: Jason Stroud Real Estate**
- Finalist: Red Shoe Realty
- Finalist: The Collective Home Group

REALTOR NAME/BUSINESS
- **Winner: Jason Stroud Team**
- Finalist: Cloe Mittan/ Red Shoe Realty
- Finalist: Mary Cooper, Welcome Home Michiana

SENIOR SERVICES
- **Winner: Brentwood at Niles Senior Living**
- Finalist: Riveridge Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center
- Finalist: North Woods Village at Edison Lakes

SEPTIC SERVICE
- **Winner: Krueger's Septic Services**
- Finalist: Pump That Septic
- Finalist: Do It All Septic Services

SPA OR MASSAGE
- **Winner: SoulSkin Aesthetics**
- Finalist: Beauty Bar 201
- Finalist: Luminous Hair Spa

TANNING SALON UV
- **Winner: Tans Down Under**
- Finalist: Beauty Bar 201
- Finalist: Tiki Tan

TANNING SALON UV ALTERNATIVES
- **Winner: Beauty Bar 201**
- Finalist: Luminous
- Finalist: Tans Down Under

TATTOO PARLOR
- **Winner: Autumn Leigh**
- Finalist: Luminous Hair Spa
- Finalist: Ink About It

TAX SERVICES
- **Winner: Balanced Accounting & Tax Services**
- Finalist: Mike's Tax Service
- Finalist: Korhorn Financial Group, Inc.

VETERINARIAN
- **Winner: River Valley Equine Clinic & Small Animal Hospital**
- Finalist: Berrien Veterinary Services
- Finalist: Bergman Veterinary Medical Center

WASTE MANAGEMENT

- **Winner: Borden Waste-Away Service, Inc.**
- Finalist: LRS (Formerly Michiana Recycling & Disposal)
- Finalist: Clean Pups Poop Scooping

WEDDING VENUE

- **Winner: Fernwood Botanical Garden**
- Finalist: The Embers at Signal Point
- Finalist: Blooming Bus Farms

RETAIL

ANTIQUE SHOP

- **Winner: Pickers Paradise**
- Finalist: Four Flags Antiques
- Finalist: The Market Place

APPLIANCE STORE

- **Winner: Camden Appliance Niles**
- Finalist: Bill's Appliances
- Finalist: Lowe's Home Improvement

BOOKSTORE

- **Winner: Casperson Books**
- Finalist: Glendora Bookshop
- Finalist: Market 2555, LLC

BUTCHER OR MEAT DEPARTMENT

- **Winner: Lowery Meat & Seafood**
- Finalist: Clear Water Meats
- Finalist: Eby's Old Fashion Meat Market

CARPET & FLOORING STORE

- **Winner: Ham's Home Improvements**
- Finalist: Abbey Carpet & Floor
- Finalist: Lowe's Home Improvement

CONSIGNMENT SHOP

- **Winner: Picker's Paradise Antique Mall**
- Finalist: The Market Place
- Finalist: WHO kNEW? Consignment

FARMER'S MARKET OR FRUIT STAND

- **Winner: Buchanan Farmers Market**
- Finalist: Eckler's Produce & Greenhouse
- Finalist: Dussel's Farm Market & Greenhouses

FLOWER SHOP

- **Winner: Annas flower shop Buchanan**
- Finalist: East Main Gardens Florist & Greenhouses Inc
- Finalist: Buchanan Floral Company & Greenhouses

FURNITURE

- **Winner: Pickers Paradise**
- Finalist: Imperial Furniture
- Finalist: The Market Place

GARDEN CENTER

- **Winner: Varner's** Greenhouse & Nursery
- Finalist: Vite Greenhouses
- Finalist: Dussel's Farm Market & Greenhouses
- Finalist: Teifkes Greenhouse

GIFT SHOP

- **Winner: Picker's Paradise Antique Mall**
- Finalist: Market 2555, LLC
- Finalist: Fernwood Botanical Garden

GROCERY STORE
- **Winner: Martin's Super Markets**
- Finalist: ALDI
- Finalist: Harding's Friendly Market

HARDWARE STORE
- **Winner: Redbud Hardware**
- Finalist: Hale's Hardware
- Finalist: Hayden & Sons Hardware

HOME IMPROVEMENT STORE
- **Winner: Redbud Hardware**
- Finalist: Lowe's Home Improvement
- Finalist: Menards

HOUSEHOLD DECOR
- **Winner: Picker's Paradise Antique Mall**
- Finalist: Annas flower shop Buchanan
- Finalist: The Market Place

HUNTING & FISHING
- **Winner: Rusty Hooks Bait & Tackle**
- Finalist: Rural King
- Finalist: The Firing Pin

LIQUOR SELLER
- **Winner: Iron Shoe Distillery**
- Finalist: Redbud Liquor
- Finalist: Crockers Party Store

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LUMBER YARD
- **Winner: Lowe's Home Improvement**
- Finalist: Big C Lumber
- Finalist: United States Lumber Company

MARINA
- **Winner: Diamond Lake Marina**
- Finalist: Luna Marine & Storage
- Finalist: Park Shore Marina

MATTRESS STORE
- **Winner: Mattress Warehouse**
- Finalist: ZSMART RENTAL-PURCHASE
- Finalist: Denver Mattress

MOTORCYCLE OR ATV DEALER
- **Winner: North End Cycle**
- Finalist: McDaniel's Harley-Davidson
- Finalist: SJR Powersports

NEW CAR DEALERSHIP
- **Winner: Tyler KIA**
- Finalist: Campbell Ford
- Finalist: C. Wimberley Ford, Inc.
- Finalist: Tyler Chrysler Dodge Jeep RAM

ORGANIC FOOD
- **Winner: Fresh Thyme Market**
- Finalist: Eby's Old Fashion Meat Market
- Finalist: Martin's Super Markets

ROOFER
- **Winner: Gean Roofing**
- Winner: Steel Master Roofing
- Finalist: Levis Construction

TIRE SHOP
- **Winner: Jackson Tire**
- Finalist: Zolman's Best One Tire & Auto Care
- Finalist: Division Tire & Battery Inc

USED CAR DEALERSHIP
- **Winner: Campbell Ford**
- Finalist: Tyler Chrysler Dodge Jeep RAM
- Finalist: C. Wimberley Ford, Inc.

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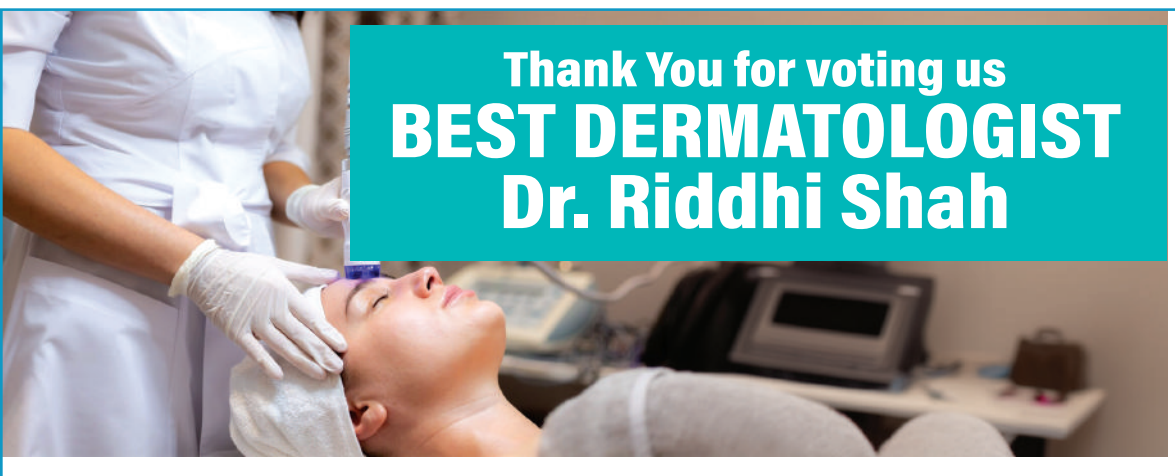
WINDOWS

- **Winner: Champion Replacement Windows of South Bend**
- Winner: Hannapel Home Center
- Finalist: Patriot Exteriors LLC
- Finalist: Renewal by Andersen of South Bend

WOMEN'S APPAREL SHOP

- **Winner: Market 2555, LLC**
- Finalist: Bucktown Boutique
- Finalist: S&J Customs



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Two-Time Winner: Michiana's Best of the Best – And Proudly Dowagiac's Best Place to Work

We're honored. **For the second year in a row**, the community has voted us **Michiana's Best of the Best**, and this year, we've also been recognized as the **Best Place to Work in Dowagiac**. These awards are more than just titles—they're a reflection of the people who walk through our doors every day, the passion behind everything we do, and the small-town heart that drives us forward.

To everyone who voted, supported, shopped with us, or simply shared a kind word—thank you. These recognitions belong to all of you, because this has never been a one-person, one-location, or one-moment success. This is a team victory, a community win, and a celebration of what can happen when you put people first.

What Makes a Workplace the Best?

It starts with culture. For us, that means showing up for one another. It means leading with kindness, keeping things fun, and creating a space where people feel heard, valued, and excited to grow. Whether someone's been with us since the beginning or just joined the team last week, we believe in investing in people—their potential, their creativity, and their goals.

Recognition as Dowagiac's Best Place to Work is especially meaningful because it confirms what we've always believed: when you take care of your team, everything else falls into place. Customers notice. The vibe is better. The energy is contagious. And most importantly, your team becomes your biggest strength.

Still Michiana's Best – Because of You

Winning Michiana's Best of the Best for the second consecutive year is surreal—and it doesn't happen without a whole lot of heart behind the scenes. We've grown, we've learned, and we've worked hard to keep raising the bar. But at the center of it all is our relationship with the people we serve.

From day one, we've aimed to be more than just a place of business. We want to be a trusted space where people feel welcome, where questions are answered, and where quality never takes a back seat. We know that in a crowded marketplace, people have options. And the fact that so many of you continue to choose us—and even took the time to vote for us—is something we'll never take for granted.

Looking Ahead, Staying Grounded

While we're proud of how far we've come, we're even more excited for what's ahead. These awards motivate us to keep listening, keep improving, and keep showing up for our community in meaningful ways. We're not perfect—but we're always working to be better.

In the meantime, we'll keep doing what we love: taking care of our customers, supporting our teammates, and staying true to our roots here in Dowagiac and across the Michiana region.

Thank you for believing in us, for growing with us, and for being the reason we can call ourselves the Best of the Best.

We're proud. We're grateful. And we're just getting started.

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